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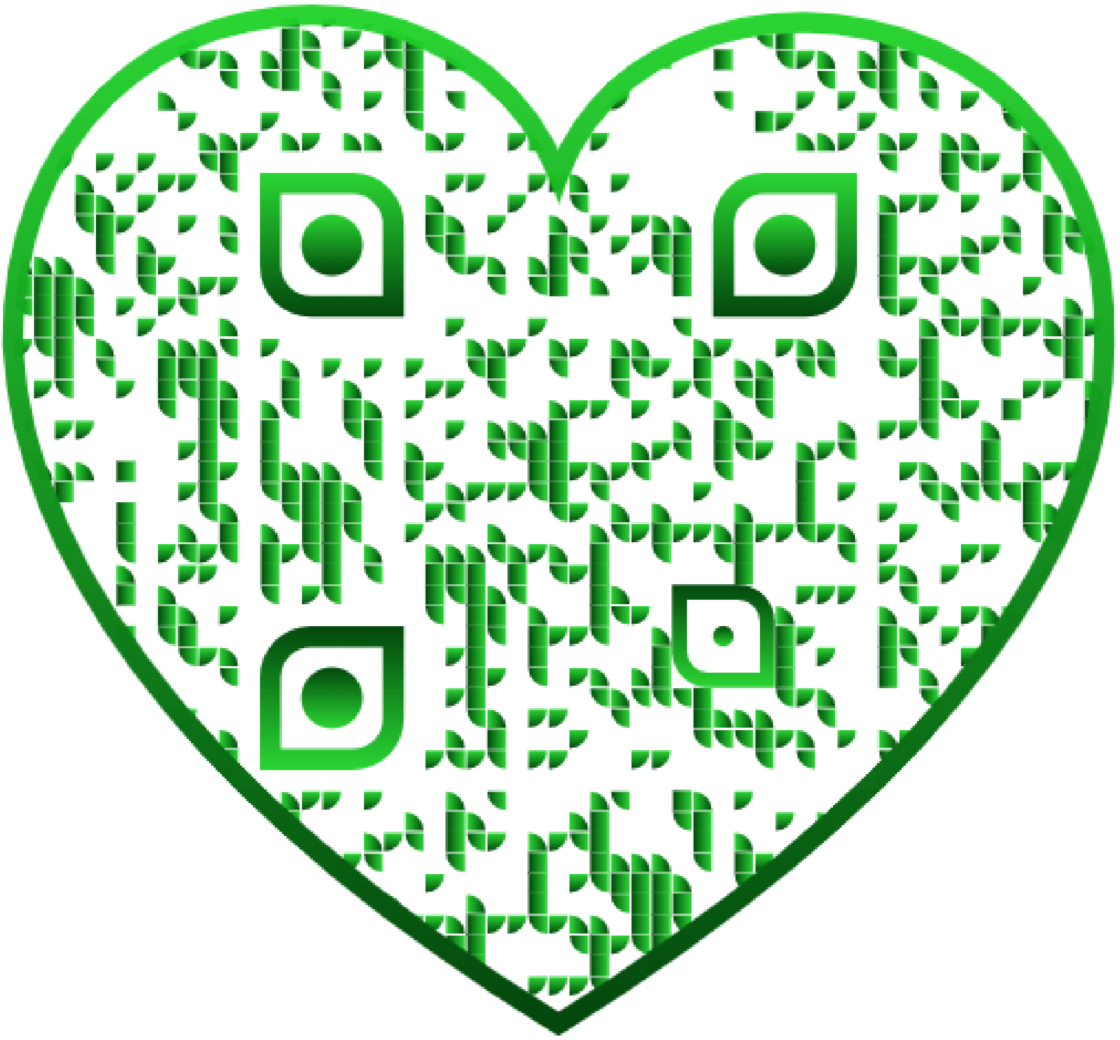

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Welcome

How do you plan the perfect Proms season? It's that unenviable question that each year faces the organisers of the world's greatest festival of classical music – a chance to showcase the talent and creativity of our collective isles, and to extend the invitation to outstanding performers from around the globe.

Following a couple of years of abridged programming due to the pandemic, 2022's Proms were a glorious return to large-scale performance, and 2023 is set to continue that trend with two months of splendid crowdpleasers, from Beethoven's Fifth, Mahler's Ninth and Stravinsky's *Rite* to celebrations of birthday boys Ligeti, Rachmaninov and Byrd, and no fewer than 15 new commissions. The range of programming this year, too, is particularly broad, with concerts inspired by film, gaming, Bollywood, Northern Soul and Mindfulness, and events taking place far beyond London's Royal Albert Hall – in Londonderry, Gateshead, Aberystwyth, Dewsbury, Truro, Perth and Great Yarmouth.

It's also gratifying to see a continued emphasis on young audiences, with two *Horrible Histories* Proms and a CBeebies 'Ocean Adventure'. On page 34, Clare Stevens traces the story of children's Proms – for many enthusiasts, their first taste of a classical music event. And for full Proms listings, plus extra information on some of this season's standout events, turn to page 26.

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

María Corte Maidagan
Illustrator and designer
'Though a challenge to illustrate, Berio's Sinfonia is an abstract, powerful masterpiece, a collage that incorporates musical quotations and cultural references showing his need to challenge history and music itself.' ***Page 20***

Charles Peebles
Conductor and researcher
'A couple of times recently, I have been caused to dip again into one or two of the pieces I disgorged in 20 years of running University College Opera. An article on those discoveries was perhaps always just round the corner.' ***Page 50***

Stephen Johnson
Writer, composer and broadcaster
'Mahler's rich and complex music defeats verbal commentary. But struggling to grasp it has deepened my appreciation, and I'm off to the Leipzig Mahler cycle with refreshed ears and mind.' ***Page 60***

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Contents

JULY 2023

BBC RADIO 3
July Radio 3 and TV listings
See p100

FEATURES

26 **Cover:** Welcome to The Proms!
Your guide to the 2023 BBC Proms season, complete with the *BBC Music Magazine* team's personal picks

34 Once a Prom a time
Clare Stevens tells the story of Proms for children

42 A titan without ego
Conductor Otto Klemperer's drama-filled career would make a fine subject for a movie, explains *Andrew Green*

46 The fight to be heard
Simon Broughton meets the exiled Afghan musicians who are championing their culture against the odds

50 Hidden treasures
Conductor *Charles Peebles* discusses the pleasures and pitfalls of researching and staging long-forgotten operas

54 Making Tracks
Composer, performer and Radio 3 presenter Hannah Peel tells *Tom Stewart* about the need to be adaptable

EVERY MONTH

8 Letters

12 The Full Score

25 Richard Morrison

38 The BBC Music Magazine Interview
Composer Eric Whitacre talks to *Jeremy Pound*

58 Musical Destinations
San Diego's stunning new outdoor concert venue

60 Composer of the Month
The contradictory world of Mahler, by *Stephen Johnson*

64 Building a Library
Jessica Duchen on Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra

98 Live concert and opera highlights

100 Radio & TV

104 Crossword and Quiz

106 Music that Changed Me
Pianist Paul Lewis

26 The BBC Proms

COVER: MATT HERRING THIS PAGE: GETTY, MARC ROYCE

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EDITORIAL
Plus our favourite recordings by conductor Otto Klemperer (see p42)
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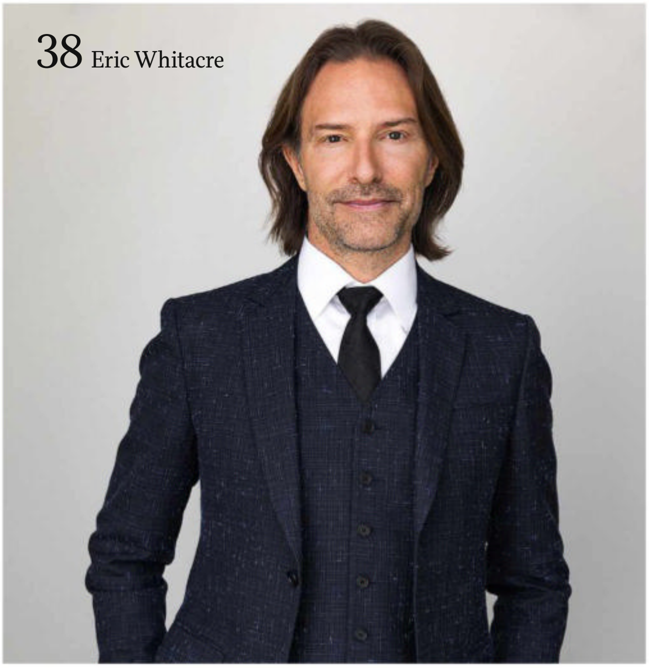

38 Eric Whitacre

46 Music from Afghanistan

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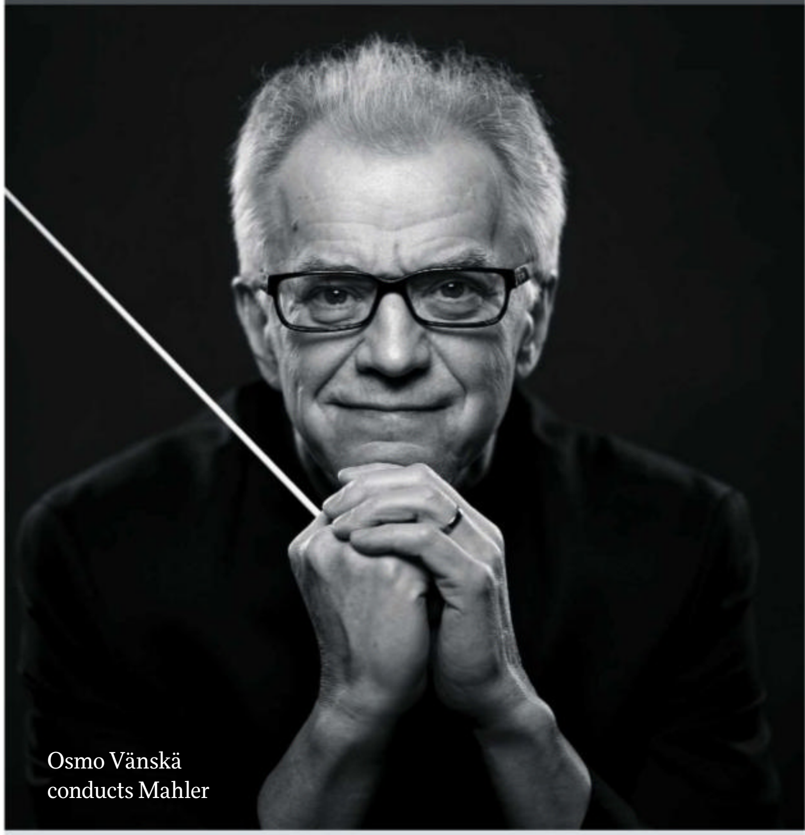
July reviews

Your guide to the best new recordings and books



Osmo Vänskä conducts Mahler

68 Recording of the Month

Mahler Symphony No. 9
Minnesota Orchestra

'This recording is one of those listening experiences where the world afterwards is a different place'

70 Orchestral 73 Concerto 76 Opera
78 Choral & Song 82 Chamber 86 Instrumental
90 Jazz 92 Brief Notes 94 Books 95 Audio
96 From the Archive 97 Reviews Index

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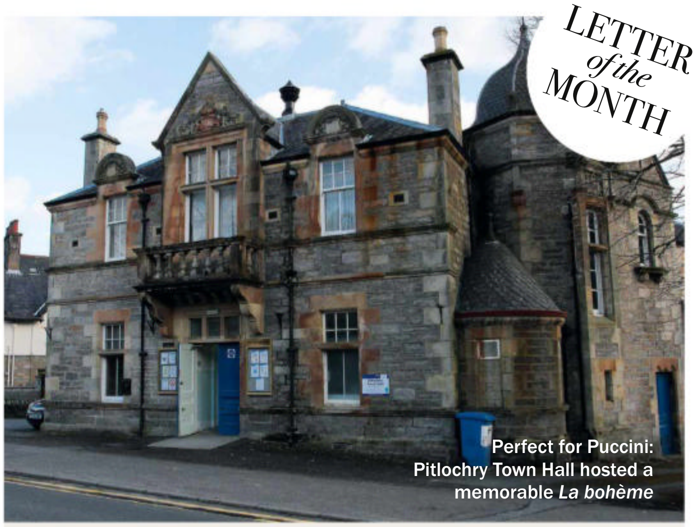
LETTER of the MONTH



Perfect for Puccini: Pitlochry Town Hall hosted a memorable *La bohème*

Parisian magic in Perthshire

I remember attending and enjoying the potato shed concert described by Richard Morrison in his column discussing unusual performance venues (June). Recently, I was lucky to see the wonderful Zeffirelli production of *La bohème* in Milan, and while the grandeur of La Scala made the occasion unforgettable, it also brought to mind a very different production in a very different venue. Years ago, I attended a scaled-down *La bohème by* Scottish Opera-Go-Round in Pitlochry Town Hall, in which the skeleton cast of half-a-dozen singers with piano accompaniment did a sterling job recreating Puccini's Paris. As Act One was coming to a close and Mimì and Rodolfo sang their famous duet, they strolled off stage towards the Latin quarter. The side door to the hall was thrown open and, unknown to the audience, it had started to snow. The spectacle of the young lovers strolling out into the moonlit night with snowflakes falling was truly magical. La Scala? Cry your eyes out.

Rod Chisholm, *Wormit, Fife*

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Sadly missed

I was sorry to read of the death of Christopher Gunning (*Farewell to...*, June). As you rightly say, he was well known for his *Poirot* theme on television and he also composed a wonderful concerto for saxophone and orchestra called *On Hungerford Bridge*, which John Harle recorded some years ago. I have not been able to listen to it, as well as most of my CD collection, following a stroke in 2020, but this piece is one of the memorable ones which I do miss!

Ian Morgan, *Malvern Link*

Red light Ravel

I'd be glad to know what evidence, other than hearsay, Oliver Zeffman has for claiming Saint-Saëns was homosexual (*Smooth operator*, June). As for Ravel, in 1966 his biographer HH Stuckenschmidt recalled being told by the conductor Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht that Ravel 'had occasional encounters with prostitutes'. Ravel scholars were cautious about accepting this, knowing the bad blood between Ravel and Inghelbrecht. But more recently, Ravel's friend and pupil Manuel Rosenthal has been quoted as recalling a phone call he made to Ravel, which gave him a crossed line, so that he heard a conversation between Ravel and a woman who was berating him for wanting to cancel a rendez-vous. Rosenthal said her tirade left no doubt as to the nature of their liaison. Ravel wrote, 'Artists are not made for marriage. We are rarely normal, and our lives even less so', and he often worked long into the small hours, resurfacing in time for lunch. So he was not 'very repressed', just intelligent.

Roger Nichols, *Herefordshire*

Huw and cry

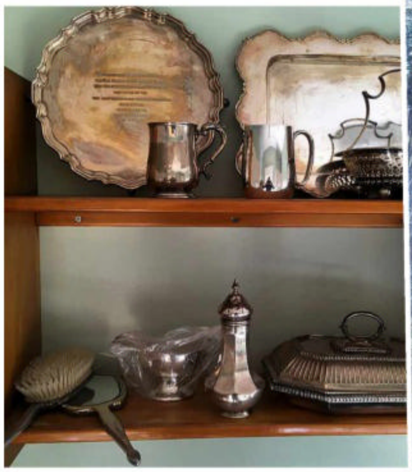
During the BBC's coverage of the Coronation ceremony, I was particularly looking forward to hearing Handel's *Zadok the Priest* in the context and surroundings for which it was written – but I was in for a shock. Presenter Huw Edwards came close to ruining it by talking over the orchestral introduction! I was no less shocked to discover (courtesy of YouTube) that Richard Dimbleby did the same in 1953.

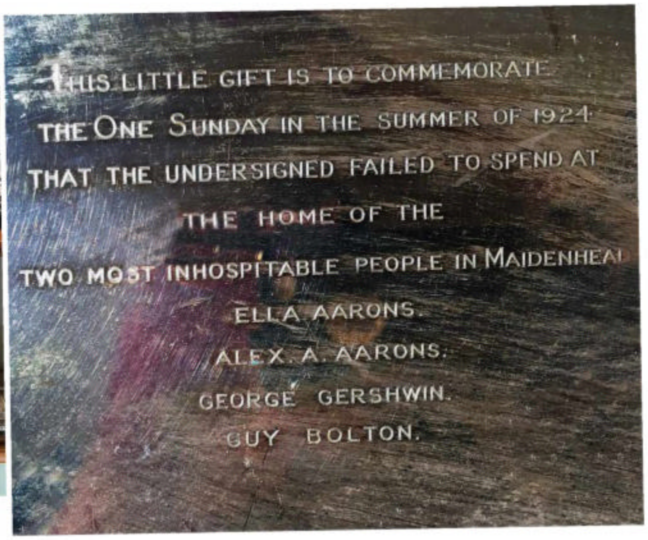
Donald Mackinnon, *Grangemouth*

Howe too spel

Dear Sharlot Smythe, As a faithful reader and subscriber of the Bee Bea Sea magazine, I am disappointed with your magazine using the spelling 'Rachmaninov'. He chose the spelling 'Rachmaninoff' and used it for almost 30 years. In the same way that we do not decide the spelling of your name is wrong and change it without your permission, you

ALAMY





Mad as a platter: but who are the 'most inhospitable people' encountered by Gershwin and co?

should not change his. The same goes for Gretchaninoff and others.
***Michael Keyton**, via email*

Ins and outs

John Greenway (Letters, June) hits the nail on the head when he suggests Rachmaninov – and thank you for sticking to the elegant westernised spelling – was ignored by academia because he offered nothing new in terms of musical development. It was the same when I was an undergraduate: Berlioz was definitely so 'in' (much to my chagrin) that he was out the other side; Brahms and Strauss were ignored, but Tchaikovsky was very 'in', much to my glee. Rachmaninov received no mention at all. Years later, during my shortlived and disastrous career as a music-shopkeeper, my beloved final year tutor John Joubert came in and picked up some Rachmaninov scores. 'Never wrote a dud note,' he declared.
***Christopher Morley**,*
Halesowen

Maidenhead monsters

In clearing my recently deceased father's flat I have stumbled on a silver drinks platter (see above) that bears a curious inscription pertaining to George Gershwin's time in the UK. I am well aware of who the 'undersigned' are and that George was in London in 1924 working on stage musicals, but who might the 'most inhospitable people in Maidenhead' be? And what was the occasion? I am not a collector of such memorabilia, have no idea how it came to be in the hands of my father (a lowly RAF officer), and would much rather it went to some institution who can breathe life into it and display it for the public. Any thoughts on who might be interested?
***John Clark**, Nottingham*

Leamington sparkle

This year's Leamington Music Festival, from late April to early May, was a simply brilliant, uplifting five days with some of Britain's finest musicians and a sprinkling of international stars including pianist Andrey Gugnin. His concert was one for the memory banks of many, while cellist Gemma Rosefield and pianist Tim Horton also delivered a remarkable concert. In its 15th instalment, the festival more than lived up to expectations, but as a subscriber to *BBC Music Magazine* it has surprised me it is not included in your annual Festival Guide (May issue). Is there a reason?
***Clive Peacock**, via email*

The editor replies:
The UK is blessed with so many first-rate music festivals that we cannot fit all of them into our guide. But be assured that we do read about and consider for publication every event we are sent details of.

Wagner introduction

At risk of over-egging the pudding, might I add my voice to those who have gone before (Letters, May and June)? My first ever Wagner performance was at the Grand in Leeds, where Sadler's Wells were performing *Twilight of the Gods* and my then headteacher had given me permission to miss an afternoon's games session to get there for a 4.30pm start. I was hooked. When the first complete cycle was mounted in St Martin's Lane, I queued overnight for standing tickets for each performance and went to every subsequent revival. Here was singing, music making and story telling of the very highest order, and how fortunate I consider myself to have been able to be there.
***Simon I'Anson**, Bath*

Admirable Nelson

I enjoyed reading John Nelson's retrospective look at his recordings (*Rewind*, April). Your readers may be interested to learn that the 1972 concert performance he referred to was done by the Pro Arte Chorale, a very fine amateur choral organisation located in New Jersey where my wife and I were singers. Back in 1972, when Nelson was music director of the Chorale, John Coulter, its founder and executive director, proposed the idea of performing the complete Berlioz *Les Troyens*. The idea was approved by the board and the Chorale then borrowed $50,000 and hired Carnegie Hall and 11 soloists, including Evelyn Lear as Dido. The performance was a great success, which led the Metropolitan Opera to mount a performance in the following season, hiring Nelson to prepare the chorus. Just before the first performance, the conductor hired became ill and Nelson stepped in at the last minute, again to great success. The rest is history.
***Charles Repka**,*
East Windsor, NJ, US

Not the first

In April's 'The month in box-sets', you state that the Silesian String Quartet 'was rather ahead of the game' with its first survey of Weinberg's complete string quartets. May I point out that already in 2012 the Quatuor Danel completed its survey of Weinberg's 17 string quartets plus two shorter works for the cpo label, which it began as early as 2007?
***Gerhard Pilzer**,*
Cologne, Germany

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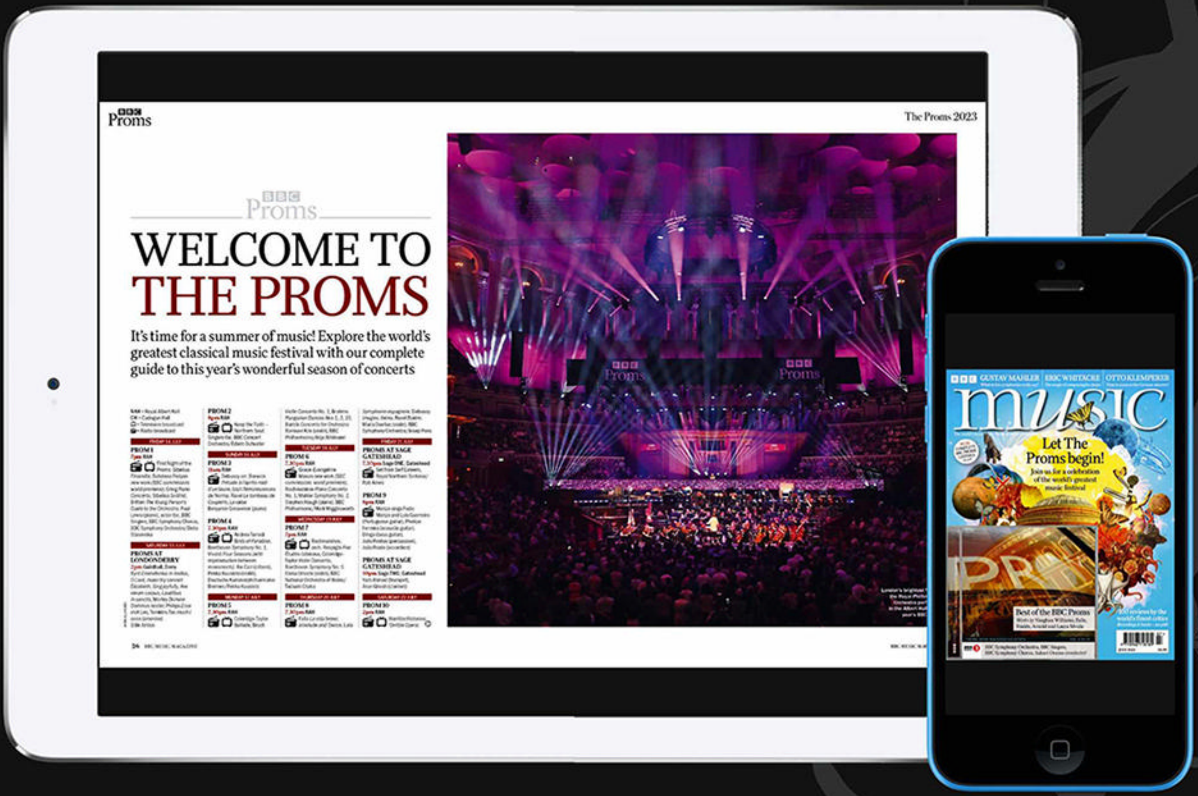

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BBC music MAGAZINE

The *full* score

Our pick of the month's news, views and interviews

Psappha to close following Arts Council funding cut

Manchester contemporary music ensemble says shortfall 'too great a challenge'

Happier days: Psappha musicians perform at Hallé St Peters in Manchester

How to make a million

The Britten Sinfonia approach

Another ensemble to lose all its Arts Council England funding, the Britten Sinfonia (above) has responded by launching Play On, an appeal to raise £1m. In early March, the likes of composer Steve Reich, trumpeter Alison Balsom and pianist Benjamin Grosvenor fronted a video to support the appeal, which by late April had raised more than £250,000. Donations have come in from across the globe, we are told, ranging from £10 to £10,000.

Psappha, the leading contemporary music ensemble, has announced that it is to close after having had its entire Arts Council England (ACE) funding cut last November. In a statement, the Manchester-based group has revealed that the loss of the funding, which constitutes around 40 per cent of its overall annual income, 'has ultimately proven too great a challenge for an organisation of our size and scale to overcome. We've worked tirelessly behind the scenes and considered every possible alternative, but we haven't identified a realistic new funding model that would allow us to continue working to the high standards we've set ourselves.'

Founded by percussionist Tim Williams in 1991 to commission, perform and promote new music, Psappha has enjoyed many illustrious moments over its three decades in existence, including, in 1995, the appointment of Peter Maxwell Davies as patron, solidifying the strong relationship the group enjoyed with the composer. The ensemble has commissioned over 500 works in that time, and has made several recordings, some on its own label, others for Metier and NMC. It says it will remain committed to completing its current 'Composing For…' scheme – which offers assistance to 24 composers in the early stages of their career – as it winds its operations down over the summer.

In the meantime, while Manchester loses an instrumental ensemble, it may be gaining an opera company. English National Opera (ENO), which has been told that it will receive no further ACE funding unless it decamps from London, says it has shortlisted five cities for its new home – Birmingham, Bristol, Greater Manchester, Liverpool and Nottingham – and will be shortly whittling the list down to three. 'All the cities have brilliant stuff going for them,' says ENO chief executive Stuart Murphy, while remaining elusive about the exact criteria that will be used to make the final choice. 'We haven't said it all depends on who will put in the most money, or which is the biggest catchment area for population, or the youngest area. It's a whole combination of stuff.'

ADRIAN LAMBERT, BEN EALOVEGA

Royal performance: the Princess of Wales joins the Eurovision fun

Windsors and losers on a mixed Eurovision night for GB

An unexpected star turn at this year's Eurovision Song Contest came from Catherine, Princess of Wales, no less. Filmed in the Crimson Drawing Room at Windsor Castle (above), the Princess elegantly played a few bars which were incorporated into the event's opening film, a performance of last year's winning song, 'Stefania', by Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra. And as Britain's dismal entry then lumbered into second last place, some started to wonder if Catherine might be persuaded to enter the competition itself next year? One of the more musically inclined members of the royal family, it is not the first time she has displayed her keyboard talents – in 2021, she accompanied singer Tom Walker in his 'For Those Who Can't Be Here' at a carol service at Westminster Abbey.

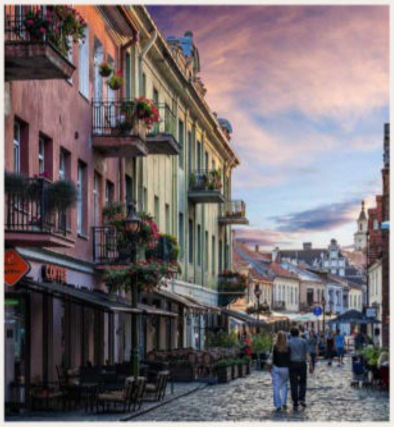
THE MONTH IN NUMBERS

700

… years of the history of Vilnius (below) marked by seven new works, performed as part of the Lithuanian capital's Music for Vilnius project.

1,000

… weeks for Karl Jenkins's *The Armed Man* (left) in the UK Official Classical Artist Albums Chart, a record spell.



5

… world premieres of new commissions, conducted by Brett Dean at the London Philharmonic Orchestra's Debut Sounds concert at the Southbank on 13 July.

12

… hours of non-stop piano playing by Peter Auker, a piano teacher from Luton, to raise money for Dementia UK.

GETTY, SOPHIE ZHAI

SoundBites

Keep calm and carry on: Stefan Jackiw

Taking a bow

What to do when, midway through the UK premiere of Glière's Violin Concerto, your £24,000 bow breaks? If you are US violinist Stefan Jackiw (above), playing the work at the Lighthouse in Poole, you simply lean over to the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's leader, borrow their bow, and carry on. 'This is something I have never experienced before,' reflected Jackiw later, adding that the incident gave the performance 'some sort of joyful spontaneity'.

A bright Tom Borrow

One trusts that Tom Borrow has never broken a piano mid-concert. If, however, he should ever do so, he now has an extra £7,000 to help pay for the repairs. The Israeli pianist has been named as the winner of this year's Terence Judd-Hallé Award which, as well as the cash prize, wins him a concerto performance with the Hallé plus a chamber recital at the Manchester-based orchestra's Hallé St Peter's venue.

Open the door, Handel

Following a £3m restoration project, the Handel Hendrix House in London is open again to the public. Consisting of 25 Brook St – home to George Frederic Handel in the 18th century – and the adjoining flat at No. 23, which was Jimi Hendrix's pad in the 1960s, the museum has been expanded. Additional artefacts have been added and a series of recitals is also planned for the year ahead.

Voices from the cave

Conductor Nathalie Stutzmann has received a public ticking off from her own musicians for suggesting in a *New York Times* interview that playing in an opera orchestra must be a boring existence that involves 'being in the back of a cave'. Heading onto social media, New York Met orchestra members responded that 'Our time spent in the orchestra pit is anything but a mundane experience, and we do not consider it a cave'.

Rising Stars

Three to look out for...

Euan Shields *Conductor*

Born: Osaka, Japan
Career highlight: Conducting Elgar's *Enigma* Variations with the Hallé at the finals of the Siemens Hallé International Conductors Competition was unforgettable – especially considering the orchestra's rich history with the composer.
Musical heroes: David Robertson has been so influential as my conducting mentor at the Juilliard School. He often quotes Robert Schumann: 'There is no end to learning.'
Dream concert: I would love to conduct a concert in Osaka, so I can invite my grandparents. They supported me when I came to the US and encouraged me to pursue my dream of becoming a musician.

Sara Övinge *Violinist*

Born: Norrköping, Sweden
Career highlight: It's difficult to choose from some very different experiences, but *Patientia*, my release on LAWO Classics, is a highlight. I'm so in love with the music and the amazing musicians I recorded it with.
Musical heroes: I'm a member of the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, whose artistic director Pekka Kuusisto always blows my mind. His way of playing is open, clever, personal and humble. When in doubt, I ask, 'What would Pekka do?'
Dream concert: I love putting together musicians from different backgrounds to create a 'surprise' concert where the audience can sit up close. If I had the means, I would do this all the time.

Jamie Woollard *Bass*

Born: London
Career highlights: Last March I performed in three new micro-operas for the Royal Opera House at St Pancras station. Performing so close to travellers in a busy station was challenging but rewarding.
Musical heroes: The Bulgarian bass Nicolai Ghiaurov is my hero for his vocal colour, technique and expression. I listen to his CDs on the way to gigs and sing along too loudly.
Dream concert: I grew up in East Sussex, so to sing dream roles like Filippo in Verdi's *Don Carlos* or John Claggart in Britten's *Peter Grimes* at Glyndebourne, so close to home, would be very special.

TIMEPIECE This month in history

A major blow: comedian Kenny Everett lends his support to musicians picketing the BBC

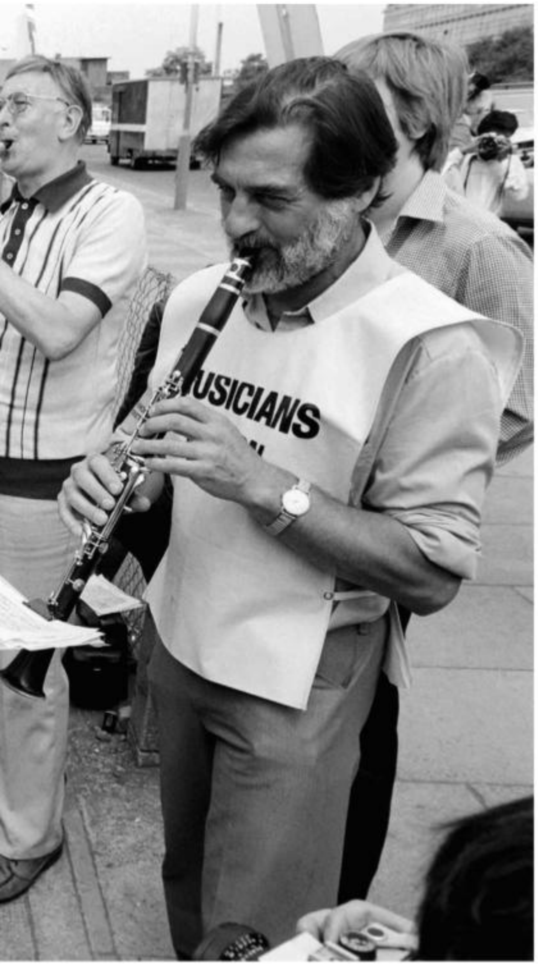
JULY 1980

Striking musicians reduce the BBC Proms to silence

'At 7:30 last night, nothing happened in the Royal Albert Hall.' Thus wrote the London correspondent of the *New York Times*, in an article dated Saturday 19 July, 1980. What should have happened the previous evening was the opening event of that year's BBC Promenade Concerts, an all-star presentation of Elgar's oratorio *The Apostles* with soloists including Felicity Lott, Robert Tear and John Tomlinson. Instead, a gramophone recording of the work was played on Radio 3, and the famous 5,000-seat auditorium remained cavernously empty. What had happened?

In short, *The Apostles* was cancelled because no musicians were available to play it. Two months earlier, the Musicians' Union had announced a strike at the BBC, protesting plans to shut down five of the corporation's 12 orchestras – 172 employees, a third of the in-house musical workforce, would be made redundant.

It was, cultural commentator Philip Schlesinger thundered, a 'massacre of the musicians'. While claiming it



merely wanted more 'flexibility', the BBC was, Schlesinger alleged, actually seeking 'the casualisation of its musical labour force', and a wholesale shift to freelance hiring practices. The language is strikingly similar to that still used today, most recently in the proposed disbandment of the BBC Singers and the scaling-down of regional orchestras.

In 1980, though, BBC managers undoubtedly faced serious financial issues. UK inflation was nearing 20 per cent, and successive governments had failed to raise the licence fee sufficiently to match the ever-rising cost of the corporation's extensive output on both radio and television. Sharp economies were needed, the BBC insisted, and not just in the musical department.

It was, however, the musical cuts which truly gripped the public's attention, not least because the annual Proms concerts were due to start in mid-July. Having this 'national institution' cancelled was, the BBC's controller of music Robert Ponsonby argued, literally unthinkable. 'I believe we have a clear moral obligation to try to secure the Proms as public concerts,' he wrote. 'We would rightly be blamed if we did not make every effort to save them for the concert-goer.'

But talks proved unproductive, and amid widespread bitterness against the BBC, photos of musicians carrying a coffin marked 'The 5 BBC Orchs' appeared in the papers. The impending Proms cancellations even attracted the attention of a UK parliamentary committee, which heard evidence about the impasse on 18 July, the day the season was supposed to open.

'We would rightly be blamed if we did not make every effort to save the Proms'

The evening before, in a gallant display of traditional eccentricity, a bunch of loyal Prommers had arrived at the Albert Hall to queue for the best standing places in the arena. 'Nine of them slept in the rain on the steps of the Albert Hall Thursday night,' the *New York Times* reported, 'just as they would have done to be first in line for tickets had the Proms opened on schedule.'

It was three weeks more before the 1980 season actually started on 7 August, with a programme of Mahler, Berlioz, Ravel and Messiaen conducted by John Pritchard. Twenty concerts in total had been cancelled, and the BBC was forced into reprieving three of the five threatened orchestras. So while the strikers' victory was anything but total – the BBC Northern Ireland Orchestra and BBC Midland Radio Orchestra were both disbanded – it was still, Musicians' Union leader John Morton believed, a considerable triumph. 'No one will claim the final settlement is perfect,' he wrote. 'But it only has to be compared with the BBC's original proposals to see that the effort was worthwhile.' ***Terry Blain***

ALAMY, GETTY

Two-lap triumph: Ovett wins gold in Moscow

Also in July 1980...

2nd: Following its world premiere on Broadway the previous year, **Sondheim**'s *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* opens in the West End. Featuring Denis Quilley in the title role and Sheila Hancock as Mrs Lovett, the production runs at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane for 157 performances.

16th: At the Republican National Convention in Detroit, **Ronald Reagan** reveals that George HW Bush is to be his running mate in the forthcoming US presidential elections. Reagan originally approached Gerald Ford for the position, but the former president turned the offer down, later revealing that he might have accepted had he been allowed more time to consider and negotiate it.

23rd: Helen Hagnes Mintiks, a violinist in the orchestra for a Berlin Ballet touring performance at the New York Met, goes missing during an interval, leaving her violin still on her chair. She is found dead the next morning, having been bound and blindfolded and thrown down a ventilation shaft from the sixth floor. Craig Crimmins, a 21-year-old stagehand, later confesses to her murder.

24th: Peter Sellers dies aged 54 at the Middlesex Hospital, having suffered a heart attack in his suite at the Dorchester Hotel two days previously. The actor and comedian had been due to meet his former Goon Show colleagues Spike Milligan and Harry Secombe for a reunion that evening – 'Anything to avoid paying for dinner', reflects Secombe ruefully in paying tribute to his friend.

26th: At the Summer Olympics in Moscow, **Steve Ovett** wins the gold medal in the men's 800m. In taking the title, Ovett beats his British rival Sebastian Coe, the world record holder. Though bitterly disappointed with the silver medal, Coe enjoys revenge a week later when he takes gold in the 1,500m, in which Ovett finishes third.

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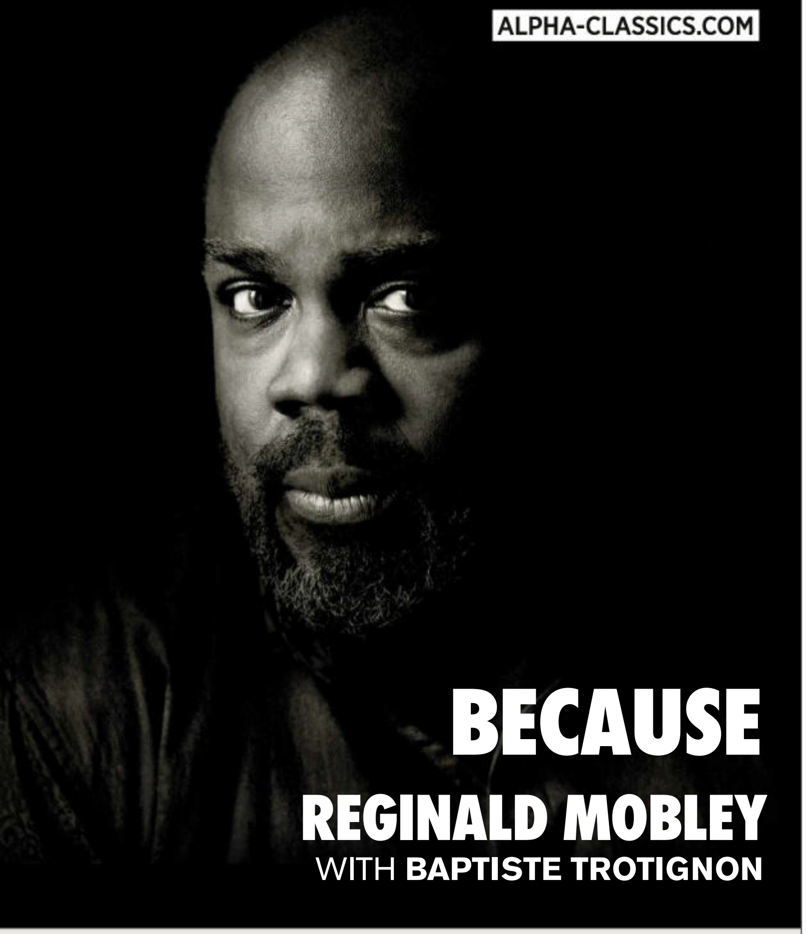

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REGINALD MOBLEY
COUNTERTENOR
BAPTISTE TROTIGNON
PIANO

PHOTO: © RICHARD DUMAS

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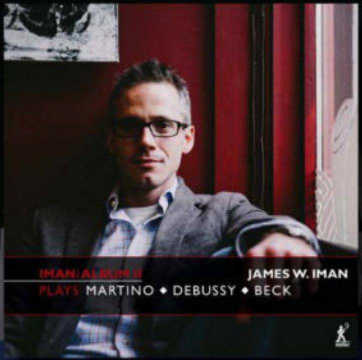

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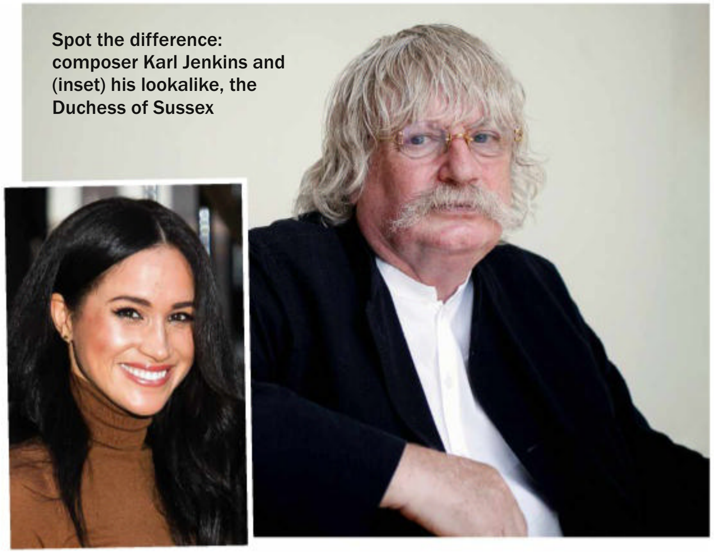
Japan gets tough on rogue platform pianists

In Japan, rules are rules. Authorities in Kakogawa have decided to remove a 'play me, I'm yours' piano from a platform in the city's railway station after continually poor behaviour by members of the public – repeat offences included playing too loudly and preventing passengers from hearing announcements, others singing along as they were playing, and some even using the instrument for prolonged periods of practice. Discussions are currently in place to decide where the piano can be located so it can be played without causing undue distress to station users.



Spot the difference: composer Karl Jenkins and (inset) his lookalike, the Duchess of Sussex

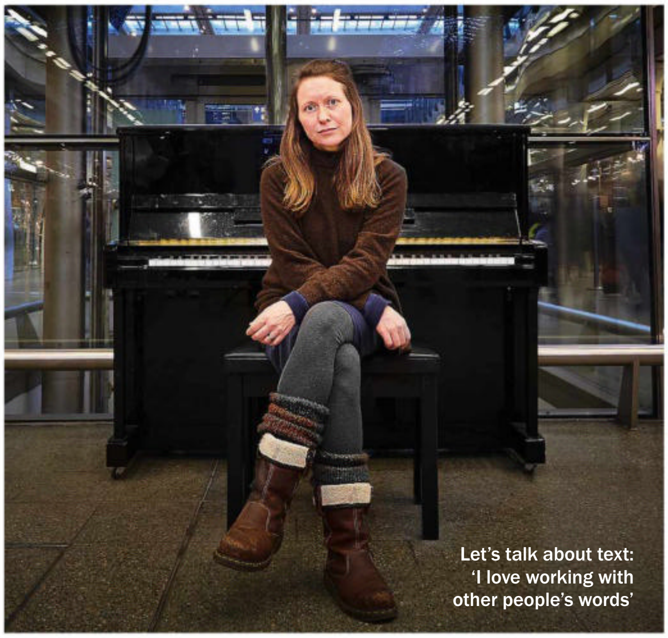
Does composer's moustache hide a royal secret?

When Sir Karl Jenkins received his invitation to attend the Coronation of Charles III, little did he expect the conspiracy theories that would follow. Soon after the event, the esteemed Welsh composer went onto TikTok to set the record straight – no, he insisted, he was *not* Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, in disguise. 'I was there because I'd written some music for the service,' explained Sir Karl, whose *Tros y Garreg* was performed by Royal Harpist Alis Huws. 'Someone wrote I was there, whoever I was, to steal the crown jewels.' It was Jenkins's full thatch of grey hair, slightly shaded glasses and, in particular, large bushy moustache that led some to believe he was not who he seemed to be. 'I look this way all the time,' he continued. 'I've had the moustache since I was 18 years old. It was very trendy then.'

GETTY, GIAN TRAINA ILLUSTRATION: JONTY CLARK

MEET THE COMPOSER

Emily Hall



Let's talk about text: 'I love working with other people's words'

Emily Hall has made her name by taking an often unconventional approach as a composer. With five mould-breaking operas and numerous song cycles under her belt, composing for Onyx Brass has been a fresh challenge. Two works, *Eternity* and *Blackcurrant River*, feature on the ensemble's new album, out on 23 June on NMC.

When I was a kid, one of my neighbours was Jonathan Harvey. I remember my Dad would be like, 'Show him your sketch!' and I'd be like, 'Uhhhhhh!' But Jonathan was lovely to me. So I had really positive associations with a composer and I think that was probably quite formative, to be honest.

I love writing songs. I love collaborating, working with other people's words and working with a singer in mind. I think that's my ultimate collaborative triangle. I'm always on the lookout for things to set.

I wrote *Eternity* in 2009/10. My husband did a sound installation at an old Nazi submarine base in Bordeaux, and he wanted me to set something which dealt with eternity and infinity – because it's a vast, cavernous space and the reverb is never ending. I found a poem by Rimbaud and actually wrote it very quickly. Onyx Brass did a lovely version of it during the pandemic, and they asked me if I would write a partner piece to go with it.

I like to feel the music beneath my fingers. I've just written for electric guitar, so I borrowed one from a neighbour. The brass piece was a bit strange for me, though, because I don't have any experience with it. That was more of a 'hope for the best' situation, but I think that because their version of *Eternity* worked well, I felt I knew the approach to take.

I'm in the middle of studying to be a music therapist. During the pandemic, when work was feeling like it was really slipping away from me, I made the decision to do it and I'm nearly at the end of my second year now. I think it's very compatible with composing.

My studies have made me think about how people listen to music, and how subjective it is. I've never really loved doing programme notes and telling people what pieces are about. The older I get, the more I realise I want to try not to prescribe too much. Maybe they had it right in Classical times when they just called things 'Sonata No. 1, 2, 3...', not giving too much away!

StudioSecrets

Danish debut: Jonas Frølund casts his clarinet wide

We reveal who's recording what and where...

Ever the champions of lesser-known gems, ***Les Talens Lyriques*** and Christophe Rousset will record Louise-Angélique Bertin's opera *Fausto* at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in June. The work, which premiered in 1831 and enjoyed just three performances, was thought lost – apart from a piano reduction score. Thankfully, the orchestral score was rediscovered by Palazzetto Bru Zane and the revival recording, featuring Karine Deshayes in the title role, will be released by Bru Zane in the near future.

Sticking with French music, Couperin's *Pièces de Clavecin* will occupy ***Andrew Appel*** for the forseeable future as the American harpsichordist undertakes an ambitious recording cycle for Orchid Classics. The complete set will be recorded over the next two years, with the label aiming to release one *Ordre* each month, digitally. The first two recordings are already out and available to stream and download.

Award-winning Danish clarinettist ***Jonas Frølund*** has recorded his debut solo album. *SOLO ALONE AND MORE* sees Frølund perform a varied programme on a variety of clarinets, with premiere recordings of works by the likes of Bent Sørensen, Jørgen Bentzon and Mette Nielsen, plus pieces by Poul Ruders, Nielsen, Stravinsky and Messiaen. Recorded last year in Denmark, his much-anticipated efforts will be released by OUR Recordings on 4 August.

If you think it's too early for Christmas music, spare a thought for the ***Choir of King's College, Cambridge***, who will channel their innermost magic and sparkle on 29 and 30 June to record a new album of works by John Rutter. The singers are gathering with the Britten Sinfonia at their home chapel to record the composer's *Visions*, alongside well-known and new carols in orchestral arrangements. King's College will release their efforts in time for the festive period.

REWIND

Great artists talk about their past recordings

This month: MADELEINE MITCHELL *Violinist*

MY FINEST MOMENT
Guto Pryderi Puw
Violin Concerto 'Soft Stillness'
Madeleine Mitchell (violin); BBC NOW/ Edwin Outwater
Divine Art DDA25160 (2017)

This album is all premiere recordings, but this piece, in a live performance with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, wasn't intended for an album at all. I was invited to play it at the Vale of Glamorgan Festival in Hoddinott Hall and it went like a dream. I'd had the benefit of two previous performances at festivals, so I knew the piece well. It just so happened to be that it went extremely well and was able to go on disc unedited, which was really lucky.

A second is the recording I did with Ensemble Bash of Lou Harrison's Violin Concerto with Percussion Orchestra, on an album called *FiddleSticks*, which was also the name of our collaboration. Right from the word go we thought we would do the concerto without a conductor; so I stood in the middle surrounded by five percussionists. It's a marvellous piece, which I'd heard as a student at the Aspen Music Festival, so it was at the back of my mind, and it was the catalyst for this really interesting collaboration.

Embracing the modern: Madeleine Mitchell is a champion of new and overlooked music

MY FONDEST MEMORY

Grace Williams *Chamber Music*

Madeleine Mitchell (violin); London Chamber Ensemble

Naxos 8.571380 (2019)

This is music which had never been recorded, indeed most of it was unpublished, so I was very pleased to do it. Grace Williams was a fine composer, but very self-critical. When I performed the Violin Sonata, people said, 'You should record this'. And I thought, 'What else is there?' It lead me on a voyage of discovery through the National Library of Wales. There's some really interesting works; she loved the trumpet, so the Sextet is an interesting combination of oboe, trumpet and piano quartet. There's also the Suite for Nine Instruments and some solo pieces. It had such a good reception. I've also chosen this because of the marvellous colleagues I managed to get together for the recordings, including David Owen Norris, John Anderson, Bruce Nockles, Roger Chase and Joseph Spooner.

I formed the London Chamber Ensemble for my very first recording in 1994 – Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. The Vale of Glamorgan Festival director heard me play for Lampeter Music Club and asked if I could get together a group to do the Messiaen. So I asked the clarinettest who I'd been in the Fires of London with and then I had an instinct about asking Chris van Kampen, who was a marvellous chamber music player. Then it was actually pianist Stephen Kovacevich who suggested I ask Joanna MacGregor to play piano.

I'D LIKE ANOTHER GO AT...

Bridge *Morceau Caracteristique*

Madeleine Mitchell (violin), Andrew Ball (piano)

Divine Art DDA25063 (2007)

This was on an album called *Violin Songs*. Having recorded a number of pieces that were written for me, for example on *In Sunlight* for NMC, I thought I would really like to record some personal favourites that I absolutely love to play. So the idea was to record song-like, short, melodic pieces, like Prokofiev's *Cinq mélodies*, which are songs without words, Elgar's *Salut d'amour* and Massenet's *Méditation*, which I've played hundreds of times all over the world. I also arranged Berg's *Die Nachtigall*, which had just come out of copyright, and ended the album with Richard Strauss's 'Morgen'.

I'm actually happy with this recording, but there are a couple of tracks where I'd only just got the music, such as Frank Bridge's *Morceau Caracteristique*, which was thought lost for 100 years. It's very virtuosic and we were lucky to discover the manuscript, which was in the RCM library, just before the recording. So I hadn't really had a chance to play it much and I'd like another go, because you then play it loads of times all over the place.

It's a lovely collection of pieces that I enjoy playing, though, so I'd always be happy to do it again.

Madeleine Mitchell's new album 'Violin Conversations' is out on 23 June on Naxos

DANIEL ROSS, BIRGIT TENGBERG, RAMA KNIGHT, TODD ROSENBERG

Breaking barriers: Rubinstein's impact was huge

My Hero

Conductor ***Lidiya Yankovskaya*** tells us why she thinks ***Anton Rubinstein*** deserves to be a more celebrated figure

A pianist, composer and conductor, Anton Rubinstein had a huge and underappreciated impact on the development of Russian music. Perhaps most obviously, he founded the St Petersburg Conservatory – he was its first director and recruited many of its early teachers. Since then, the Conservatory has given us the likes of Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky, as well as Serge Diaghilev, Jascha Heifetz, Mariss Jansons and many others.

Rubinstein also managed to become a major musical figure, despite being Jewish at a time when Jews were discriminated against in Russian culture. As a composer, for example, he has a massive output – concertos, symphonies and some fantastic but rarely performed operas.

Most importantly of all, Rubinstein really believed in creating, in making things, and in ensuring a future for music – and not just music in general, but Russian music in particular. He found ways to incorporate truly Russian sounds, even though indigenous Russian music was seen as backwards, folksy or not 'good enough' for the German classical tradition.

He's not given enough credit for this, but I think it's thanks to him that we have this great tradition of Slavic music. He really broke through barriers and supported the next generation of composers. In particular, the so-called 'Mighty Handful' (including Borodin, Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov) were able to do what they did thanks to the barriers he broke down and the support and mentorship he offered.

Yankovskaya conducts Rusalka at Santa Fe Opera this July-August

THE LISTENING SERVICE

Berio's gift for listening

Rather than reject the composers of the past, Berio celebrated memories of masterpieces which continue to haunt anyone who hears his work, says **Tom Service**

ILLUSTRATION: MARIA CORTE MAIDAGAN

What piece, composed in 1968, connects all of the following: the death of Martin Luther King, Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony and a cavalcade of music quotations from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* to Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony to Debussy's *La mer*? The answer is the Italian composer Luciano Berio's Sinfonia, his 'symphony' that takes the roots of the word seriously: the Greek origins of 'symphony' means 'sounding together'. Berio's Sinfonia for orchestra and amplified voices makes all of that, and much more, sound together in a piece that's as vertiginously thrilling as it was 55 years ago.

Bernstein commissioned Sinfonia for the New York Phil; it originally had four movements – Berio conducted his revised five-movement version at the Proms in 1969. Sinfonia's prophetic power comes from the way Berio throws his ears and imagination open to the world, taking in his musical memorial for Martin Luther King in its second movement, and in its third movement turns the orchestra into a gigantic sampling machine. Decades before digital technology, Berio writes music that chews up and spits out a dizzying strata of words and music from Beckett to Beethoven; most radically of all, that whole third movement is composed over the scherzo of Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony.

What does all this inclusiveness mean? We need to put Berio's whole approach in the context of the new music of the time: Berio's contemporaries Boulez and Stockhausen were making new music that made as little reference as possible to the tainted past. Berio, by contrast, doesn't reject the past – he celebrates it. And ironically, Berio quotes Boulez's and Stockhausen's music in Sinfonia's third movement, turning their music into just another fragment of history to be plundered in his orchestral maelstrom.

> We're always connecting the music we're listening to with everything we've heard

And as you're listening to that third movement, the point isn't to recognise the fragments of Ravel's *La valse* or Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* as they race past, but to throw yourself into the delirious moment of Berio's seemingly infinite musical connections, and the realisation that, as one of the voices says, 'the unexpected is always upon us'.

For all its tumultuous density, I think Berio is only daring to do in Sinfonia what we all do as listeners. We're always connecting the music we're listening to with everything else we've ever heard in our musical memories, even if that's a subconscious process for most of us. The joy of Berio's work is how he includes all those references that tumble into the way he hears Mahler, Stravinsky, Ravel and everyone else; he shapes the art of listening into the substance of Sinfonia, making all those teeming and overwhelming connections sound together. 55 years on, Sinfonia is a gift for our listening that won't stop giving.

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

Tom Service explores how music works in *The Listening Service* on Sundays at 5pm

FAREWELL TO...

Piano master: Pressler's career spanned 60 years

Menahem Pressler Born 1923 *Pianist*

In a career that spanned some six decades, Menahem Pressler was truly one of the world's finest and most distinguished pianists. Revered as a soloist and in demand as a chamber musician, he founded the great Beaux Arts Trio and remained its pianist for over 50 years, until it was disbanded in 2008. Born in Magdeburg, Germany, Pressler fled to Israel in 1939 and just a few years later won first prize at San Francisco's Debussy International Piano Competition. From then on, his star continued to burn bright in the US and further afield, making his chamber debut (with the Beaux Arts Trio) in 1955, working with the world's very best ensembles and establishing himself both in the studio and in the classroom – he was a much-loved professor at Indiana's Jacobs School of Music.

Grace Bumbry Born 1937 *Mezzo-soprano*

This leading lady of opera epitomised the word 'star' in a spectacular 50-year career which saw her defy crtics, blaze a trail and light up the greatest stages. Born in St Louis, Missouri, Bumbry was inspired by the African-American contralto Marian Anderson and made it her mission to sing. Studies led her to her greatest teacher and champion, Lotte Lehmann, and by the end of 1961 Bumbry had wowed audiences at the Paris Opera and Bayreuth – the first person of colour to perform on both stages. A switch to soprano roles courted more critical fervour, but Bumbry took it in her stride, and went on to become one of America's most decorated musical artists.

Ingrid Haebler Born 1929 *Pianist*

Once one of the leading interpreters of Viennese piano repertoire, Ingrid Haebler was a highly respected instrumentalist and chamber musician. Though she performed all over the world – she made her US debut in 1959 in Minneapolis and worked regularly with violinist Henryk Szeryng – it was in her native Austria that she was perhaps most revered, winning prestigious honours from institutions in both Salzburg and Vienna.

Also remembered...

Paul Desenne (*born 1959*) was a Venezuelan cellist and composer who was a fouding member of the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra, for which he also regularly composed.

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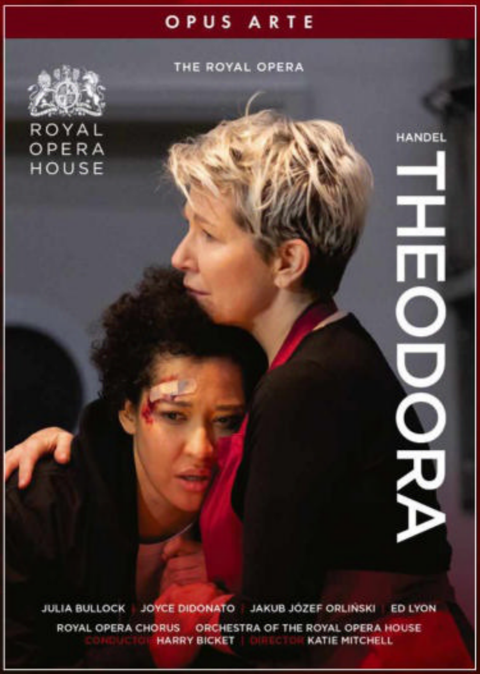

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Tree-four time: the Consone Quartet name their current favourites

Music to my ears

What the classical world has been listening to this month

Consone Quartet

Magdalena Loth-Hill *(violin)*: I have been listening to the album *The Goat Rodeo Sessions*, featuring violinist Stuart Duncan, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, double-bassist Edgar Meyer and **Chris Thile** on the mandolin. It's such a clever and addictive mix of classical and folk music. I saw Chris perform live at the Southbank Centre as part of the London Jazz Festival and was blown away – he has infectious energy and enthusiasm, and seems equally at home playing solo Bach and Bartók as he does bluegrass.

Agata Daraškaitė *(violin)*: I have a deep love for **Schumann**, and the recordings I keep returning to are the complete lieder by baritone Christian Gerhaher and pianist Gerold Huber. The way they shape phrases and colour is so natural, expressive and intimate – it's chamber music at its finest! As string players performing music without words, we often deal with more abstract ideas, but there is so much we can learn from singers.

Elitsa Bogdanova *(viola)*: I keep coming back to an album of music by the Bulgarian composer, pianist, teacher and architect **Dimitar Nenov** (1901-53), performed by my friend, the pianist Veneta Neynska. This album takes me back to my student days at the National Music School in Sofia, where I first discovered music by a whole host of Bulgarian composers, all marrying our unique folklore to the Western tradition. Veneta's deep connection to Nenov's music shines through in this beautifully crafted album.

> 'Billie Eilish's "No Time to Die" gives me goosebumps every time I hear it'

And also…

George Ross *(cello)*: I love listening to **podcasts** while travelling. Unfortunately, when you're on the move it's easy to zone out and miss a lot, but one show I make sure I'm fully tuned in for is *This American Life*. Each week, Ira Glass and his team of journalists compile several individual stories into compelling, themed episodes. There are almost 800 episodes, so you're best off clicking on the 'Recommended' tab of their website if you're unsure where to start!

The Consone Quartet are at King's Lynn Festival on 23 and 24 July

CRITIC'S CHOICE

John-Pierre Joyce

A pair of chamber and instrumental recitals in London and Italy recently gave some moments for quiet reflection. At Wigmore Hall, musicians from the **Purcell School** played trios and quintets by Dohnányi, Rachmaninov, Danzi and Franck, and over at the Toniolo Theatre in Mestre (the landward side of Venice), pianist **Lukas Geniušas** gave a recital of Chopin's Études and the first version of Rachmaninov's Sonata No.1. Both were moments, too, to appreciate the dedication and skills of a new generation of musicians.

Isabelle Van Keulen Violinist

At the moment I am really into the five String Serenades by **Robert Fuchs** (1847-1927). I heard the Fourth Serenade played by the Württemberg Chamber Orchestra Heilbronn a few months ago and thought 'this is wonderful music' – I have since been digging further into it with regards to programming concerts in the future. The Serenades are lyrical, full of life and fantastic for strings. They are also quite easy listening, so if you've had a demanding first half, it's something nice and soothing for the second half!

While looking for something to programme alongside **Max Richter**'s *Vivaldi Four Seasons, Recomposed*, I came across his *On The Nature of Daylight*. It is very catchy, which I love, plus you can immediately tell who the composer is – just like you can tell, say, Lutosławski or Beethoven from the first note. It is quite minimalist, lovely to listen to and great to play. It all sits very well under the fingers, which makes it such a pleasure.

I absolutely adore the singer **Billie Eilish**. My daughter, who is just finishing her studies at

university, introduced me to Eilish's music, and I find it all so unique – the girl herself, her talent and the way she sings in that husky, soft-spoken voice. It's genius. I can't get enough of her song 'No Time to Die', which gives me goosebumps every time I hear it. The song's title is also rather a nice motto for life, I'd say.

And also...

I love **gardening**. There is nothing better than getting my fingers into the earth, and while doing so I also get some fantastic music ideas – it's a bit like meditation in that it is relaxing but also the mind is able to wander as you do it. And then, it is such a pleasure to plant something, see it grow, smell it, see nature in it and so on. And I absolutely love weeding!

Isabelle Van Keulen directs the Scottish Chamber Orchestra at the East Neuk Festival, 2 July; *see p98*

Gavin Higgins Composer

I've been listening to the symphonies of **Per Nørgård** lately. They are just extraordinary, mad, amazing pieces of music. I've got some of the scores here; sometimes you listen to

music and you know exactly what the composer has done, but with Nørgård's music I always have to check the score to see how he's made these kinds of sounds. No. 3 is huge, the opening of No. 7 is extraordinary, and No. 1 is such a different soundworld to all the others. He's a genius.

Heathers – The Musical (above) is brilliant, fun, witty and really well written. I've never seen it on stage, but really want to now, and I'm a fan of the film. It's kind of like a pop musical with original songs, and the band in the pit is the standard keyboard, guitar, drums kind of thing. I am a musicals fan. This might be a strange thing to hear from a classical composer, but I like seeing stories told through song and music.

I listen to a lot of music on Spotify when out walking – I have a dog, so I'm out at least twice a day. Having an hour's walk is a good time to listen to new stuff and I recently stumbled across an artist called **Rationale**. 'Oil and Water' is a great song about a couple who can't make it work and how perhaps they need to call it a day. It's brilliant and beautiful.

And also...

I have Tourette's Syndrome and I'm an ambassador for Tourettes Action. So I've been doing a lot for **Tourette's Awareness Month** of late. Until recently, I hadn't talked much about my Tourette's and OCD, which was bad when I was young. I became involved with brass bands and realised the more I played, my Tourette's and OCD would stop. It's in no small way that I'm a musician now because of my Tourette's, but I also use music to get a handle on it.

Gavin Higgins's cantata The Faerie Bride is performed at the Three Choirs Festival, 23 July

CRITIC'S CHOICE

Freya Parr

A decade after he first took on Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* in *Recomposed*, **Max Richter** returned to this momentous concerto last year. Aspects of *Recomposed* can be heard throughout *The New Four Seasons*, but the addition of period instruments, gut strings and vintage analogue synthesisers make for a much grittier aesthetic. In Elena Urioste's electrifying rendition with the Chineke! Orchestra, moments of captivating stillness give way to punchy, almost violent outbursts – perfect for my many scenic train trips across Europe in recent months.

Our Choices The *BBC Music Magazine* team's current favourites

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

This year's Proms launch in Soho featured a surprise appearance from members of the **Chineke! Orchestra**, including founder and artistic director Chi-chi Nwanoku on the double bass. The group of just five string players performed a stripped-down arrangement of Coleridge-Taylor, plus Dvořák, and defied the dry acoustics to have the crowd enthralled. A great opportunity to see these talented performers in an intimate setting.

Jeremy Pound *Deputy editor*

The arrival of summer inevitably means chatting with friends about where we might go for a long walk or two – if I can get them to go for a route with a musical link, so much the better. I have my eye on a circular jaunt near Salisbury that begins and ends up in Harnham, an area well known to the painter John Constable and the subject of **Vaughan Williams**'s atmospheric but little known tone poem *Harnham Down*. Maybe playing them the recording by the BBC Philharmonic under Rumon Gamba will win them over?

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

It was great finally to see guitarist **Sean Shibe** play live recently, on tour with Manchester Collective. I caught them at St George's Bristol where they played a beautiful and gritty programme featuring new music by Kelly Moran and Emily Hall (see p17)alongside Cage, Eastman and David Lang. Ever the musical adventurer, Shibe used a bow on his electric guitar for Hall's *Potential Space* and doubled up as percussionist in Lang's thrilling *Killer*.

Steve Wright *Content producer*

I've been realising that I need to let more **Debussy** (above) into my life. At the moment, I am captivated by his chamber music, particularly the

wonderful Cello Sonata. The middle movement (*Sérénade*) has some thrilling Spanish sonorities – as the cello is plucked and teased, I find myself sheltering from the midday sun in some sultry Andalusian square. The *Finale*, meanwhile, is all nervous energy, with that tumbling then rising melody, by turns wistful and joyous.

Alice Pearson *Cover CD editor*

Dutilleux's cello concerto *Tout un monde lointain* ('A whole distant world') is based on poems by fellow Frenchman Charles Baudelaire and beautifully conveys the connection between poetry and music. Dutilleux wrote it for Mstislav Rostropovich and it's the Russian cellist's 1974 EMI recording with the Orchestre de Paris that I'd choose above all others.

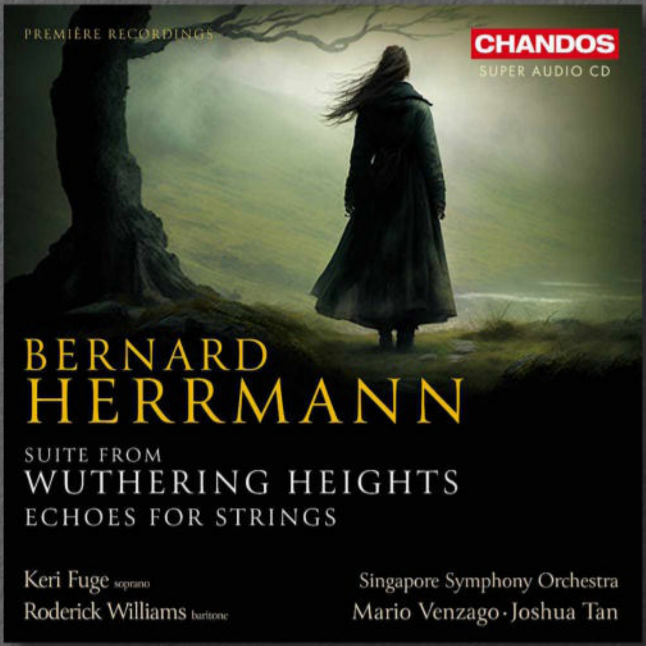
MATTHEW JOHNSON, NIKOLAJ LUND, GETTY

CHANDOS

THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL

JULY RELEASES

SURROUND–SOUND HYBRID SACD | DOLBY ATMOS SPATIAL AUDIO



RECORDING OF THE MONTH

HERRMANN

SUITE FROM 'WUTHERING HEIGHTS'; ECHOES FOR STRINGS

Keri Fuge| Roderick Williams |Singapore Symphony Orchestra | Mario Venzago | Joshua Tan

We are proud to present two world première recordings of works by the legendary Hollywood composer Bernard Herrmann – *Echoes*, (arranged for string orchestra by Hans Sørensen), and an extensive suite, (compiled by Hans Sørensen), from Herrmann's little-known opera *Wuthering Heights*. Keri Fuge and Roderick Williams take the roles of Cathy and Heathcliff.

CHSA 5337

SURROUND–SOUND HYBRID SACD | DOLBY ATMOS SPATIAL AUDIO

CHSA 5310

SHOSTAKOVICH

SYMPHONY NO. 14; SIX VERSES OF MARINA TSVETAYEVA

Elizabeth Atherton | Peter Rose Jess Dandy | BBC Philharmonic | John Storgårds

John Storgårds and the BBC Philharmonic continue their survey of Shostakovich's late symphonies with this recoding of the Fourteenth, with Elizabeth Atherton and Peter Rose as soloists. Jess Dandy sings the powerful Six Verses of Marina Tsvetayeva.

CHAN 20181

JOACHIM MENDELSON GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ

CHAMBER WORKS

Karolina Stalmachowska Piotr Sałajczyk | Silesian Quartet

The award-winning Silesian Quartet presents a new album featuring neglected works by two composers from Warsaw – Joachim Mendelson and Grażyna Bacewicz. The oboist Karolina Stalmachowska and pianist Piotr Sałajczyk join the Silesians in Mendelson's Quintet.

SURROUND–SOUND HYBRID SACD | DOLBY ATMOS SPATIAL AUDIO

CHSA 5296

KENNETH FUCHS

ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOLUME 1

Adam Walker | Sinfonia of London John Wilson

Sinfonia of London and John Wilson present the first album in a series devoted to works by the leading American composer Kenneth Fuchs. *Cloud Slant* is a virtuosic concerto for orchestra, composed especially for these forces. Adam Walker is the soloist in the flute concerto *Solitary the Thrush*.

ALREADY AVAILABLE

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CHSA 5300

TCHAIKOVSKY

ORCHESTRAL WORKS

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra | Alpesh Chauhan

Alpesh Chauhan presents his début recording for Chandos with this collection of symphonic fantasies by Tchaikovsky, the first in a projected Tchaikovsky series. The BBC SSO plays with spirit and finesse for their Associate Conductor.

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Richard Morrison

The AI revolution is here, but how will it affect the musical world?

Every few months I get a message from an excited reporter at the newspaper where I pretend to work. Scientists in Japan (it's usually Japan or California) have used a computer to complete Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony! Or the machine has written a new Mozart concerto, or some more waltzes for *Swan Lake*. Would I see if I can tell the difference between this and the real thing?

I always say yes, because I find the experience strangely heartening. The gap between what human genius can achieve and what computers can fake, even when programmed by people who are themselves geniuses in their field, is – at least in this specific area – still vast. If fed with enough music, it's true, computers can now ape the rules of composition and historical styles. But great composers break rules and revolutionise style. That's their job. More vital still, they use their skills at manipulating aural phenomena somehow to convey emotions from their brains to ours. Machines, by definition, don't do emotion.

Of course, machines already hugely help the musical process. They can eliminate much of the drudgery of notating, recording and disseminating compositions, search for obvious errors, auto-tune singers with dodgy intonation and much else. What they don't have, however, is the uniquely human capacity to reflect life and death, love and loss, entirely in soundwaves.

Or perhaps I should write 'not yet', because what's become obvious in recent months is the huge leaps that artificial-intelligence scientists have made with their 'large language models' – programs drawing on databases comprising billions of words and images. And, as a result, how astonishingly adept such universally available tools as ChatGPT have become at faking, well, anything you want really – pictures, videos, essays, business letters, even poetry.

I have no idea whether the warnings of concerned scientists about the impact of these chatbots on humanity – warnings that range from massive job losses and the increasingly dangerous spreading of fake news to the subjugation of our entire species – are credible or not. Pondering such things is well above my pay grade. But I do have a few thoughts about the impact on our artform.

> AI has a limitless capacity to imitate every tiny nuance of anything fed into it

First, it's entirely likely that AI will change musical life considerably. For instance, low-grade compositional tasks – I'm thinking of those dreary soundtracks churned out for video games, or the sort of club music based on a driving drumbeat and a few synthesised squiggles – are already well within the capabilities of machines. If that puts mediocre composers out of work, or forces them to write more imaginative things, so be it.

The scope for faking recordings will also be hugely increased. Expect soon to encounter new albums of fresh material purporting to come from famous dead singers – whether it's Sinatra or Pavarotti, Amy Winehouse or Maria Callas. They will sound uncannily like the real thing, too, because AI has a limitless capacity to imitate every tiny nuance of anything fed into it.

Such innovations will probably have a novelty value for a while, and will certainly produce a lot of lucrative work for m'learned friends in the legal world, given the copyright complications involved in faking anything. And the irony is that AI machines, with their infinite capacity for sifting through archived material, will then be used in court cases to support or refute claims of copyright infringements by other AI machines. Perhaps, one day, even the lawyers and judges will be chatbots.

Once the novelty wears off, however, I wonder how big the public's appetite for AI-produced music will actually be. What sells music is what has always sold it: extraordinary feats of imagination, spectacle, charisma, profundity, soul and spirituality. Plus, live performances, of course. In none of these areas, thank goodness, do machines come close to challenging real human beings.

So, my view of the AI revolution, insofar as it affects music, can be summed up in ten words: enjoy the benefits; do not panic about warnings of doom. From the invention of the gramophone to the advent of streaming, new technologies have always been seen by some as an existential threat. Always, though, musicians find ways to adapt and survive. They will again.

I hope you feel reassured after reading this. But don't get too complacent. The question you should now be asking is: did Richard really write these words of comfort, or did his computer?

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times

BBC Proms

WELCOME TO THE PROMS

It's time for a summer of music! Explore the world's greatest classical music festival with our complete guide to this year's wonderful season of concerts

RAH = Royal Albert Hall
CH = Cadogan Hall
= Television broadcast
= Radio broadcast

FRIDAY 14 JULY

PROM 1
7pm RAH
First Night of the Proms: Sibelius *Finlandia*, Bohdana Frolyak *new work (BBC commission: world premiere)*, Grieg *Piano Concerto*, Sibelius *Snöfrid*, Britten *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra.* Paul Lewis (piano), actor tbc, BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Symphony Orchestra/Dalia Stasevska

SATURDAY 15 JULY

PROMS AT LONDONDERRY
2pm Guildhall, Derry
Byrd *Emendemus in melius, O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth, Sing joyfully, Ave verum corpus, Laudibus in sanctis*, Morley *Domine Dominus noster*, Philips *Ecce vicit Leo*, Tomkins *Too much I once lamented.* Stile Antico

MARK ALLAN/BBC

PROM 2
8pm RAH
Keep the Faith – Northern Soul: Singers tbc, BBC Concert Orchestra/Edwin Outwater

SUNDAY 16 JULY

PROM 3
11am RAH
Debussy arr. Borwick *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Liszt *Réminiscences de Norma*, Ravel *Le tombeau de Couperin, La valse* Benjamin Grosvenor (piano)

PROM 4
7.30pm RAH
Andrea Tarrodi *Birds of Paradise*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 1*, Vivaldi *Four Seasons (with improvisation between movements).* Ale Carr (cittern), Pekka Kuusisto (violin), Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen/Pekka Kuusisto

MONDAY 17 JULY

PROM 5
7.30pm RAH
Coleridge-Taylor *Ballade*, Bruch *Violin Concerto No. 1*, Brahms *Hungarian Dances Nos 1, 3, 10*, Bartók *Concerto for Orchestra* Bomsori Kim (violin), BBC Philharmonic/Anja Bihlmaier

TUESDAY 18 JULY

PROM 6
7.30pm RAH
Grace-Evangeline Mason *new work (BBC commission: world premiere)*, Rachmaninov *Piano Concerto No. 1*, Mahler *Symphony No. 1.* Stephen Hough (piano), BBC Philharmonic/Mark Wigglesworth

WEDNESDAY 19 JULY

PROM 7
7pm RAH
Rachmaninov, orch. Respighi *Five Études-tableaux*, Coleridge-Taylor *Violin Concerto*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 5.* Elena Urioste (violin), BBC National Orchestra of Wales/ Tadaaki Otaka

THURSDAY 20 JULY

PROM 8
7.30pm RAH
Falla *La vida breve: Interlude and Dance*, Lalo *Symphonie espagnole*, Debussy *Images: Ibéria*, Ravel *Boléro.* María Dueñas (violin), BBC Symphony Orchestra/Josep Pons

FRIDAY 21 JULY

PROMS AT SAGE GATESHEAD
7.30pm Sage ONE, Gateshead
Set from Self Esteem, Royal Northern Sinfonia/ Rob Ames

PROM 9
8pm RAH
Mariza sings Fado: Mariza and Luís Guerreiro (Portuguese guitar), Phelipe Ferreira (acoustic guitar), Dinga (bass guitar), João Freitas (percussion), João Frade (accordion)

PROMS AT SAGE GATESHEAD
10pm Sage TWO, Gateshead
Yazz Ahmed (trumpet), Arun Ghosh (clarinet)

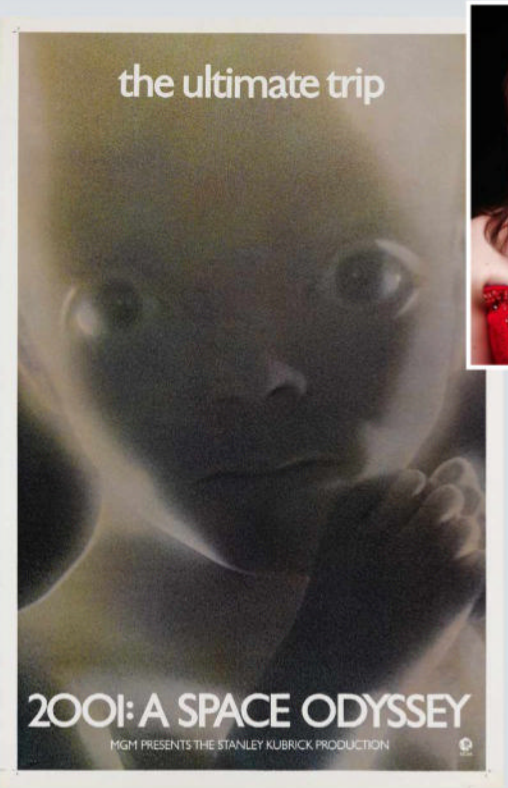
SATURDAY 22 JULY

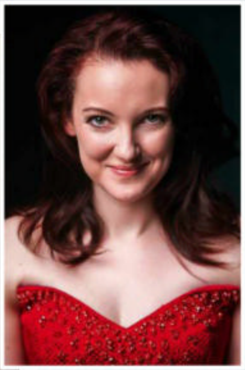
PROM 10
2pm RAH
Horrible Histories: 'Orrible Opera:

London's brightest festival: the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra performing in the Albert Hall at last year's BBC Proms

BBC Music Magazine's Proms Picks

Members of our editorial team name the concerts they won't want to miss this year





Ligeti spectacular: original poster for Stanley Kubrick's film; Jennifer France is a soloist in the Requiem

Proms at Sage Gateshead *22 July*

Missy Mazzoli, Mozart and Brahms

I've gone for the evening Prom at Sage Gateshead on Saturday 22 July, featuring the Royal Northern Sinfonia and its principal conductor Dinis Sousa. The programme is a very tasty one: it pairs possibly my favourite Brahms symphony (the sunny No. 2) with possibly my favourite Mozart piano concerto (the moody, dramatic No. 20). But I'm most drawn by the prospect of hearing American composer Missy Mazzoli's *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)* performed live. This ten-minute symphonic poem is, in the composer's own words, 'music in the shape of a solar system, a collection of rococo loops that twist around each other within a larger orbit'. Hearing it is a mind-expanding experience – and, within the wonderful timber-clad acoustics at Gateshead's Sage One, I'm sure it will be only more so.

***Steve Wright** Content producer*

Prom 36 *11 August 2023*

A Space Odyssey

György Ligeti's 100th birthday is marked in numerous ways at this year's Proms, but no tribute would be complete without acknowledging the powerful partnership between his signature polyphonic sounds and Stanley Kubrick's mind-bending visuals in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. If ever a cinematic director understood the power of music, it was Kubrick – and the invaluable role of orchestral and choral repertoire in his science fiction classic is here celebrated not only with Ligeti's Requiem and *Lux aeterna* but also, after the interval, with Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, used to magnificent effect in Kubrick's film as the sun rises over a pre-historic Earth. Joining the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Edward Gardner will be the choirs of the LPO and the Royal Northern College of Music and the Edvard Grieg Kor, plus soprano and mezzo soloists Jennifer France and Clare Presland.

***Charlotte Smith** Editor*

Prom 40 *Monday 14 August*

Brahms and Dora Pejačević

I have recently been rattling on to anyone who will listen about Dora Pejačević's Symphony F sharp minor, as recorded last year by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Sakari Oramo. So imagine my delight that, in the centenary of her death, the same forces will be giving her masterpiece its Proms debut. The symphony's belligerent opening and final bars reveal a Croatian composer who was not afraid to bang her fists, while in between we hear music that dances Dvořák-like but also sweeps us along with the melodic grace of, say, Brahms or Tchaikovsky. Now add to the mix evocative horn calls, lugubrious woodwind solos and, in the third movement, a stirring, Schubertian trombone motif, and you have a superb evening in store.

***Jeremy Pound** Deputy Editor*

Prom 46 *19 August*

Manchester Collective: Neon

This late night show, Neon, marks Manchester Collective's second visit to the Proms (2021 was their debut) and the typically electrifying programme of works by Steve Reich, David Lang, Hannah Peel, Oliver Leith and Ben Nobuto perfectly showcases the group's adventurous streak and commitment to new music. The Nobuto and Peel pieces were commissioned by the Collective and received premieres in smaller venues in the UK, so I'm looking forward to experiencing them in the more cavernous Albert Hall. Size matters not, though, as whatever the stage, the Manchester Collective will always cast its spell and draw you into its soundworld. I'm not sure I've ever encountered an ensemble that performs with such verve, grit, raw musicality and unmitigated joy. For the audience, it's infectious.

***Michael Beek** Reviews editor*

Cast from *Horrible Histories* TV Show, Birmingham Stage Company actors, English National Opera Singers, Chorus & Orchestra/Keri-Lynn Wilson

PROM 11
6pm RAH
Horrible Histories: 'Orrible Opera
Cast from *Horrible Histories* TV Show, Birmingham Stage Company actors, English National Opera Singers, Chorus & Orchestra/Keri-Lynn Wilson

PROMS AT SAGE GATESHEAD
7.30pm Sage One, Gateshead
Missy Mazzoli *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)*, Mozart *Piano Concerto No. 20*, Brahms *Symphony No. 2*. Kristian Bezuidenhout (piano), Royal Northern Sinfonia/Dinis Sousa

PROMS AT SAGE GATESHEAD
10.15pm Sage One, Gateshead
Kristina Arekelyan *new work (BBC commission: world premiere)*. Katrina Porteous (poet), Chorus of Royal Northern Sinfonia, Voices of the River's Edge/Grace Rossiter, Timothy Burke

SUNDAY 23 JULY

PROMS AT SAGE GATESHEAD
2pm Sage Two, Gateshead
Florence Price *Because, Resignation, Sunset*, HT Burleigh: *Jean, Traditional American spirituals including 'My Lord What a Morning', 'Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen', 'Great Campmeetin', 'Steal Away', 'Save me Lord', 'By and by, 'There is a Balm in Gilead'* and more. Reginald Mobley (countertenor), Baptiste Trotignon (piano)

PROMS AT SAGE GATESHEAD
3pm Sage One, Gateshead
CBeebies: Ocean Adventure concert. Royal Northern Sinfonia/Kwamé Ryan

PROM 12
7.30pm RAH
Helen Grime *Meditations on Joy (BBC co-commission: UK premiere)*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 9*. Eleanor Dennis (soprano), Karen Cargill (mezzo), Nicky Spence (tenor), Michael Mofidian (bass-baritone), BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ryan Wigglesworth

On a grand scale: Anna Lapwood pays homage to the moon in Prom 15; (above left) Ryan Wigglesworth conducts Beethoven's 'Choral' in Prom 12

GETTY, NICK CUTTS, TOM ARBER, BEN EALOVEGA

MONDAY 24 JULY

PROM 13
7.30pm RAH
Catherine Lamb *Portions Transparent/Opaque*, Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 6 'Pathétique'*. BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ilan Volkov

TUESDAY 25 JULY

PROM 14
7pm RAH
Noriko Koide *Swaddling Silk and Gossamer Rain (BBC commission: European premiere)*, Beethoven *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Elgar *Enigma Variations.* Jan Lisiecki (piano), BBC Symphony Orch/Elim Chan

PROM 15
10.15pm RAH
Moon and Stars: Hans Zimmer arr. Anna Lapwood *Interstellar Suite: I. Stay, II. Cornfield Chase, III: No Time for Caution,* Philip Glass *Mad Rush,* Kristina Arakelyan *Dreamland*, Debussy arr. Guilmant *String Quartet – III. Andantino*, Debussy arr. Anna Lapwood *Clair de Lune*, Olivia Belli *new work (BBC commission: world premiere)*, Ghislaine Reece-Trapp *In Paradisum*, Kristina Arakelyan *Star Fantasy.* Anna Lapwood (organ)

WEDNESDAY 26 JULY

PROM 16
7.30pm RAH
Rachmaninov *The Bells*, Shostakovich *Symphony No. 5.* Mané Galoyan (soprano), Dmytro Popov (tenor), Rodion Pogossov (baritone), BBC Symphony Chorus, Hallé Choir, The Hallé/Sir Mark Elder

THURSDAY 27 JULY

PROM 17
7.30pm RAH
Stravinsky *Symphony of Psalms*, Orff *Carmina Burana.* Mari Eriksmoen (soprano), Levy Segkapane (tenor), Germán Olvera (baritone), University of Birmingham Voices, CBSO Youth Chorus, CBSO Chorus, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Kazuki Yamada

FRIDAY 28 JULY

PROM 18
7.30pm RAH
A Tribute to Lata Mangeshkar, Bollywood Legend: Palak Muchhal, Palash Muchhal (singers), Indian Percussion Players TBC, City of Birmingham Symphony Orch/Michael Seal

SATURDAY 29 JULY

PROM 19
6.30pm RAH
Mendelssohn *Elijah.* Carolyn Sampson (soprano), Helen Charlston (mezzo), Andrew Staples (tenor), Roderick Williams (baritone), Scottish Chamber Orchestra Chorus, Scottish Chamber Orchestra/ Maxim Emelyanychev

SUNDAY 30 JULY

PROMS AT ABERYSTWYTH
2pm Aberystwyth Arts Centre
Palestrina *Io son ferito, ahi lasso*, Gesualdo *Asciugate i begli occhi*, Monteverdi *Sì, ch'io vorrei morire*, Gibbons *The Silver Swan*, Byrd *This Sweet and Merry Month of May*, Weelkes *Come, Clap thy Hands*, Ligeti *Nonsense Madrigals*, Judith Weir *Madrigal*, Sarah Rimkus *My heart is like a singing bird.* The Gesualdo Six/Owain Park

PROM 20
7.30pm RAH
Herrmann *Vertigo Suite*, Mason Bates *Piano Concerto (UK premiere)*, Prokofiev *Symphony No. 3.* Daniil Trifonov (piano), BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Gustavo Gimeno

MONDAY 31 JULY

PROM 21
7pm RAH
Derrick Skye *Nova Plexus (BBC commission: world premiere)*, Copland *Clarinet Concerto*, John Adams *Harmonium.* Annelien van Wauwe (clarinet), Crouch End Festival Chorus, BBC National Chorus of Wales, BBC National Orchestra of Wales/ Ryan Bancroft

TUESDAY 1 AUGUST

PROM 22
7pm RAH
Prokofiev *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 5.* Isata Kanneh-Mason (piano), BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Ryan Bancroft

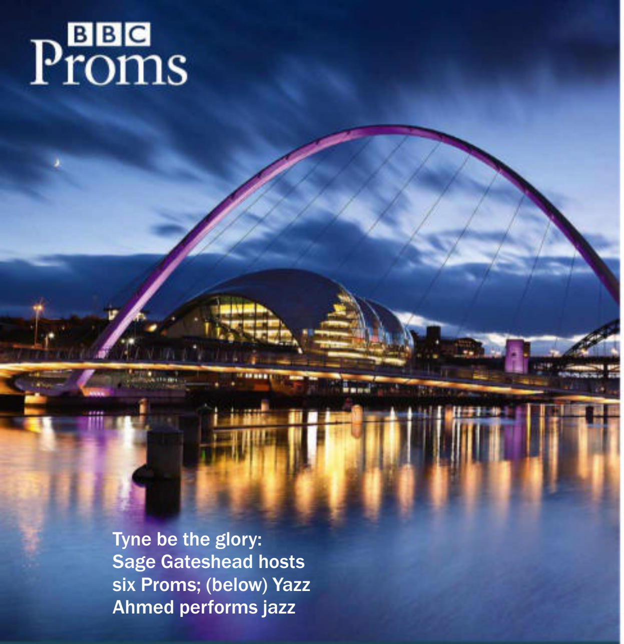
PROM 23
10.15pm RAH
Programme includes Duke Ellington, trans. David Berger *Braggin' In Brass*, Sean Jones *The 29ers*, Wycliffe Gordon *We're Still Here*, Mongo Santamaría, arr. John Clayton *Afro Blue*, Billie Holiday, arr. Cecil Bridgewater *Fine and Mellow*, Duke Ellington, arr. Slide Hampton Cottontail, Herbie Nichols, arr. Edsel Gomez/Cecil Bridgewater *Lady Sings The Blues*, Leonard Lee, arr. Frank Foster *Let The Good Times Roll.* Dee Dee Bridgewater (vocals), Sean Jones (trumpet), Carnegie Hall National Youth Jazz Orchestra/Sean Jones

WEDNESDAY 2 AUGUST

PROM 24
7.30pm RAH
Ivan Karabits *Concerto for Orchestra No.1, 'A Musical Gift to Kyiv' (UK premiere)*, Mozart *Horn Concerto No. 4*, Rachmaninov *Symphony No. 2.* Felix Klieser (horn), Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/Kirill Karabits

THURSDAY 3 AUGUST

PROM 25
11.30am RAH
Walton *Orb & Sceptre*, Mozart *Horn Concerto No. 4*, Myroslav Skoryk *The High Pass – Melody*, Rachmaninov *Symphony No. 2, IV: Allegro Vivace.* Felix Klieser (horn), Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/Kirill Karabits



Tyne be the glory: Sage Gateshead hosts six Proms; (below) Yazz Ahmed performs jazz

Away from the Albert Hall

This year's 'Proms at' events

The Royal Albert Hall regularly appears on *BBC Music Magazine*'s July cover as the iconic symbol of the BBC Proms, but London does not hog all the fun – this year sees 12 concerts staged in various towns around the UK. Indeed, the Proms first travelled outside London back in 1944, when the prospect of German bombs prompted a temporary move to the comparative safety of Bedford for much of the season. After that, it wouldn't be until the early 2000s that the Proms spread its roots further, this

> This year sees 12 concerts staged in various towns around the country

time with the introduction of Proms in the Park events to co-ordinate with the Last Night – first in Gateshead, then with the likes of Belfast, Swansea, Glasgow and Manchester joining the party.

Last year, the Proms lunchtime Chamber Concerts moved from London's Cadogan Hall to eight venues around Britain, and the same format is being followed in 2023: Derry (15 July), Aberystwyth (30 July), Dewsbury (6 August), Truro (27 August) and Perth (3 September) will welcome artists such as cellist Laura van der Heijden and The Gesualdo Six. On the evening of 8 September, meanwhile, the Hippodrome in Great Yarmouth will be filled with the sound of orchestral favourites performed by the BBC Concert Orchestra.

Taking things a step further, however, will be Sage Gateshead, which hosts a whole weekend of Proms events from 21-23 July. With local residents the Royal Northern Sinfonia leading the way, the stunning Tyneside venue will stage six concerts in all, ranging from traditional Mozart and Brahms to psychedelic jazz from Yazz Ahmed and Arun Ghosh and a CBeebies: Ocean Adventure Prom.

PROM 26
7.30pm RAH

Gerald Barry *Kafka's Earplugs (BBC commission: world premiere)*, Walton *Violin Concerto*, Sibelius *Symphony No. 1*. James Ehnes (violin), BBC Philharmonic/John Storgårds

FRIDAY 4 AUGUST

PROM 27
7.30pm RAH

Jimmy López Bellido *Perú Negro (UK premiere)*, Rachmaninov *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini*, Walton *Belshazzar's Feast*. Yuja Wang (piano), Thomas Hampson (baritone), BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Klaus Mäkelä

SATURDAY 5 AUGUST

PROM 28
7.30pm RAH

Hindemith *Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*, Richard Strauss *Four Last Songs*, Copland *Symphony No. 3*. Masabane Cecila Rangwanasha (soprano), National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain/ Carlos Miguel Prieto

SUNDAY 6 AUGUST

PROM 29
11am RAH

JS Bach *Sinfonia in D, BWV 1045; Motet: 'Singet dem Herrn', BWV 225*, CPE Bach *Heilig ist Gott*, Mozart, compl. Clemens Kemme *Mass in C minor, K427*. Lucy Crowe (soprano), Nardus Williams (soprano), Jess Dandy (contralto), Benjamin Hulett (tenor), Robert Davies (baritone), Dunedin Consort/John Butt

PROMS AT DEWSBURY
3pm Dewsbury Town Hall

Rachmaninov, arr. R Wallfisch *Vocalise*, Dora Pejačević *Cello Sonata*, Lara Weaver *A thing that holds*, Rachmaninov *Cello Sonata*. Laura van der Heijden (cello), Jâms Coleman (piano)

PROM 30
7.30pm RAH

Lili Boulanger *D'un matin de printemps*, Rachmaninov *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Walton *Symphony No. 1*. Benjamin Grosvenor (piano), Sinfonia of London/John Wilson

MONDAY 7 AUGUST

PROM 31
7pm RAH

Poulenc *Dialogues des Carmélites (Dialogues of the Carmelites)*. Cast includes Sally Matthews, Katarina Dalayman, Golda Schultz, Karen Cargill, Florie Valiquette, Paul Gay. Glyndebourne Festival Opera, London Philharmonic Orchestra/Robin Ticciati

TUESDAY 8 AUGUST

PROM 32
7pm RAH

Dora Pejačević *Overture*, Grace Williams *Violin Concerto*, Holst *The Planets*. Geneva Lewis (violin), London Symphony Chorus (women's voices), BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Jaime Martín

WEDNESDAY 9 AUGUST

PROM 33
7pm RAH

Weber *Oberon – overture*, Dora Pejačević *Songs: Schmetterlingslieder, Op. 52; Verwandlung, Op. 37b; Liebeslied, Op 39*, Mahler-Werfel, orch C & D Matthews *Songs: 'Die stille Stadt'; 'Licht in der Nacht'; 'Bei dir ist es traut'*, Rachmaninov *Symphony No. 1*. Sarah Connolly (mezzo), BBC Philharmonic/John Storgårds

PROM 34
10.15pm RAH

Mindful Mix Prom: Programme to include Radiohead, arr. G Lawson *Pyramid Song*, Philip Glass *String Quartet No. 3 'Mishima', VI: Closing*, Arvo Pärt *The Deer's Cry*, Ola Gjeilo *Serenity*, Eric Whitacre *All Seems Beautiful to Me*, Ken Burton *A Prayer*, Roxanna Panufnik *Floral Tribute (BBC co-commission: world premiere)*, Byrd *Diliges Dominum*. Ola Gjeilo (piano), Carducci String Quartet, Voces8

THURSDAY 10 AUGUST

PROM 35
7.30pm RAH

Berg *Violin Concerto*, Mahler, compl. D Cooke *Symphony No. 10*. Leila Josefowicz (violin), BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Sir Andrew Davis

FRIDAY 11 AUGUST

PROM 36
7.30pm RAH

Ligeti *Requiem (Revised version 1997); Lux aeterna*, R Strauss *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Jennifer France (soprano), Clare Presland (mezzo-soprano), Edvard Grieg Kor, Royal Northern College of Music Chamber Choir, London Philharmonic Choir, London Philharmonic Orchestra/ Edward Gardner

Playing with fire: Yuja Wang takes on Rachmaninov in Prom 27

SATURDAY 12 AUGUST

PROM 37
7.30pm RAH

Weber *Der Freischütz – overture*, R Schumann *Piano Concerto*, Mendelssohn *Symphony No. 3 'Scottish'*. András Schiff (piano), Budapest Festival Orchestra/ Iván Fischer

SUNDAY 13 AUGUST

PROM 38
2pm RAH

Audience Choice: Budapest Festival Orchestra/Iván Fischer

PROM 39
7.30pm RAH

Ligeti *Mysteries of the Macabre*, Bartók *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 3*. Anna-Lena Elbert (soprano), András Schiff (piano), Budapest Festival Orchestra/ Iván Fischer

Such sweet sorrow: Rattle says goodbye to the LSO in two Proms

MONDAY 14 AUGUST

PROM 40
7.30pm RAH
Brahms *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Dora Pejačević *Symphony in F sharp minor.* Martin Helmchen (piano), BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Sakari Oramo

TUESDAY 15 AUGUST

PROM 41
7.30pm RAH
Ligeti *Lontano*, Beethoven *Piano Concerto No. 4*, Shostakovich *Symphony No. 10.* Alexandre Kantorow (piano), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/ Vasily Petrenko

WEDNESDAY 16 AUGUST

PROM 42
7.30pm RAH
Elgar *In the South*, Chopin *Piano Concerto No. 1*, R Strauss *Aus Italien.* Seong-Jin Cho (piano), Philharmonia Orchestra/ Santtu-Matias Rouvali

THURSDAY 17 AUGUST

PROM 43
7.30pm RAH
György Kurtag *Endgame (Fin de partie) (UK premiere).* Morgan Moody, Hilary Summers, Frode Olsen, Leonardo Cortellazzi, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/ Ryan Wigglesworth

FRIDAY 18 AUGUST

PROM 44
7.30pm RAH
Samy Moussa *Symphony No. 2 (BBC co-commission: European premiere)*, Shostakovich *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Stravinsky *The Firebird – complete ballet.* Pavel Kolesnikov (piano), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Gemma New

SATURDAY 19 AUGUST

PROM 45
7pm RAH
Mahler *Symphony No. 3.* Jenny Carlstedt (mezzo-soprano), Trinity Boys Choir, BBC Symphony Chorus (ladies), BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Sakari Oramo

PROM 46
10.15pm RAH
Hannah Peel *Neon*, Ben Nobuto *SERENITY 2.0*, Oliver Leith *A different 'Fantasie from Suite No. 5 in G minor'*, David Lang, *Mystery Sonatas: No. 7, 'Glory'*, Steve Reich *Double Sextet* Manchester Collective/ Rakhi Singh (director/violin)

SUNDAY 20 AUGUST

PROM 47
7.30pm RAH
Ligeti *Concert Românesc, Violin Concerto*, Mozart *Piano Concerto No. 23; Symphony No. 41 'Jupiter'.* Isabelle Faust (violin), Alexander Melnikov (piano), Les Siècles/ François-Xavier Roth

MONDAY 21 AUGUST

PROM 48
8pm RAH
Jules Buckley Orchestra/ Jules Buckley

TUESDAY 22 AUGUST

PROM 49
7.30pm RAH
R Schumann *Das Paradies und Die Peri.* Magdalena Kožená (soprano), Lucy Crowe (soprano), Andrew Staples (tenor), Florian Boesch (bass-baritone), Linard Vrielink (tenor), Jeanine de Bique (soprano), London Symphony Chorus, London Symphony Orchestra/Sir Simon Rattle

WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST

PROM 50
7pm RAH
Handel *Samson (1743 version).* Allan Clayton, Jacquelyn

GETTY, JULIA WESELY

It's 'Leb wohl!' from him...

Ratttle bids a Mahlerian farewell

The time has finally come for Simon Rattle to step down from the LSO podium and head to Munich and the open arms of the Bavarian Radio Symphony. He'll make his last appearances as music director with two concerts at this year's Proms. The first, Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri* in its first complete performance at the Proms, features the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, with an international cast including Magdalena Kožená (aka Mrs Rattle). The second sees the conductor preside over Mahler's Ninth, which is rather fitting as it was the composer's own farewell (albeit a rather more permanent one).

> Remarkably, Rattle's appearance on 27 August will mark his 78th Prom

Rattle's appearance on 27 August will mark his 78th Prom, which is a remarkable record – indeed he has only been absent for six Proms seasons since he made his debut in 1976. His first Prom was with London Sinfonietta at The Roundhouse and featured a programme of contemporary works by Birtwistle, Lutyens and Barry Guy, while his debut at the Albert Hall came the following year, again with London Sinfonietta, conducting Stravinsky, Mozart and Schoenberg. He returned with the Philharmonia, English Chamber Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony, National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic and Berlin Philharmonic before taking to the stage with the LSO for the first time in 2017 (Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*). So Rattle will surely be back with the Bavarians, though he is likely relishing the thought of a full-time return to Germany given his recent, and very vocal, response to the general state of the UK's musical landscape. So it's only farewell, for now, we hope...
Prom 49, 22 August & Prom 56, 27 August

Hair-raising challenge: Nicholas Collon takes the Aurora to new heights

Rite from the heart

Time to sacrifice the music stands

Nicholas Collon's Aurora Orchestra is no stranger to The Proms, having given several memorable performances from memory, including Stravinsky's *The Firebird* in 2021. But the composer's *Rite of Spring* presents hitherto untested challenges.

'This type of rhythmic, theatrical music works so well from memory,' says Collon. 'We don't talk about the memorising aspect of what we do very often, nor think about it in such technical terms, but the sheer demands of performing *The Rite* from memory make it a hugely exciting undertaking. It's leagues more difficult than *The Firebird*, as it's genuinely difficult to remember, with its myriad metre changes and repeats. Part II's "Sacrificial Dance", for example, which is repetitive without being systematic in nature, is always off-putting, even for ensembles performing with the music.'

> 'The demands of performing it from memory make it hugely exciting'

The first half of the programme will be devoted to 'a dramatic and musical exploration of *The Rite*', which, according to Collon, will delve into the 'inner workings' of the piece – 'the history and context of its composition, plus the musical elements'. Conceived by Jane Mitchell, the orchestra's creative director, the 40-minute cross-artform piece will use movement, projection, lighting and design to bring the work to life.

'Two actors will voice memories of Stravinsky, his son Fyodor, dancer Marie Rambert and so on,' Collon explains, 'during which the orchestra will perform excerpts from the work. It's something we've done during our previous Proms performances and is a nice way of flexibly using the space. This is such a complicated piece so we're giving people the opportunity to hear sections of it, and how it's built up, and then in the second half they'll hear it performed as a whole.'

Proms 62 & 63, 2 September

The trumpet shall sound: Aaron Azunda Akugbo performs Haydn's Concerto in Prom 61

Stucker, Joélle Harvey, Jess Dandy, Brindley Sherratt, Jonathan Lemalu, Philharmonia Chorus, Academy of Ancient Music/Laurence Cummings

THURSDAY 24 AUGUST

PROM 51
7.30pm RAH
Judith Weir *Begin Afresh (BBC commission: world premiere)*, Robert Schumann *Symphony No. 1 'Spring'*, Elgar *Violin Concerto*. Christian Tetzlaff (violin), BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Sakari Oramo

FRIDAY 25 AUGUST

PROM 52
6.30pm RAH
Julia Adolphe *Makeshift Castle (European premiere)*, R Strauss *Death and Transfiguration*, Prokofiev *Symphony No. 5*. Boston Symphony Orchestra/ Andris Nelsons

PROM 53
10.15pm RAH
Bach *Cantata No.170, 'Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust'*, *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3*, *Cantata No. 35, 'Geist und Seele wird verwirret'*. Iestyn Davies (countertenor), Tom Foster (organ), The English Concert/Kristian Bezuidenhout (harpsichord)

SATURDAY 26 AUGUST

PROM 54
2pm RAH
Wagner, transcr. Demers *Meistersinger – Prelude*, Rachel Laurin *Prelude and Fugue in G (world premiere)*, JS Bach arr. Dupré *Cantata No. 146, 'Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal' – Sinfonia*, Coleridge-Taylor *Three Impromptus*, Reger *Chorale Fantasia on 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott'*, William Grant Still *Elegy*, Prokofiev, transcr. Demers *Romeo and Juliet (excerpts)*. Isabelle Demers (organ)

PROM 55
7.30pm RAH
Carlos Simon *Four Black American Dances (European premiere)*, Stravinsky *Petrushka (1947 version)*, Gershwin *Piano Concerto in F*, Ravel *La valse*. Jean-Yves Thibaudet (piano), Boston Symphony Orchestra/ Andris Nelsons

SUNDAY 27 AUGUST

PROMS AT TRURO
2pm Hall for Cornwall
Schubert *'Trout' Quintet*, Coleridge-Taylor *Nonet in F minor, Op. 2*, Gershwin (arr. T Poster) *Songs*. Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective

PROM 56
7.30pm RAH
Poulenc *Figure humaine*, Mahler *Symphony No. 9*. BBC Singers, London Symphony Orchestra/Sir Simon Rattle

MONDAY 28 AUGUST

PROM 57
7pm RAH
Fantasy, Myths and Legends: BBC Concert Orchestra/ Anna-Maria Helsing

TUESDAY 29 AUGUST

PROM 58
8pm RAH
Jon Hopkins *New work (BBC commission: world premiere), plus pieces from Immunity, Singularity, and Music for Psychedelic Therapy.* Jon Hopkins, BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Jules Buckley

WEDNESDAY 30 AUGUST

PROM 59
7.30pm RAH
Beethoven *Overture: The Consecration of the House*, Tchaikovsky *Violin Concerto*, Dvořák *Symphony No. 9*. Augustin Hadelich (violin), Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich/ Paavo Järvi

THURSDAY 31 AUGUST

PROM 60
7.30pm RAH

Weill *Threepenny Opera Suite*, Adès *Piano Concerto*, Rachmaninov *Symphony No. 3*. Kirill Gerstein (piano), Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra/ Vladimir Jurowski

FRIDAY 1 SEPTEMBER

PROM 61
7.30pm RAH
Valerie Coleman *Seven O'Clock Shout*, Coleridge-Taylor *Four Novelletten*, Haydn *Trumpet Concerto in E flat*, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson *Sinfonietta No. 1, III: Rondo*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 4*. Aaron Azunda Akugbo (trumpet), Chineke!/Anthony Parnther

SATURDAY 2 SEPTEMBER

PROM 62
3pm RAH
The Rite by Heart: A dramatic exploration of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Stravinsky *The Rite of Spring (from memory)* Aurora Orchestra/ Nicholas Collon

PROM 63
7.30pm RAH
The Rite by Heart: A dramatic exploration of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Stravinsky *The Rite of Spring (from memory)*. Aurora Orchestra/Nicholas Collon

SUNDAY 3 SEPTEMBER

PROMS AT PERTH
2pm **Perth Concert Hall**
Haydn *String Quartet in E flat, Op. 9 No. 2*, Tippett *Piano Sonata No. 2*, Shostakovich *Piano Quintet*. Steven Osborne (piano), Heath Quartet

PROM 64
4pm RAH
Berlioz *Les Troyens (The Trojans)*. Alice Coote, Michael Spyres, Paula Murrihy, Lionel Lhote, Adèle Charvet, William Thomas, Ashley Riches, Beth Taylor, Monteverdi Choir, Orchestra Révolutionnaire et Romantique/ John Eliot Gardiner

MONDAY 4 SEPTEMBER

PROM 65
7.30pm RAH
Bruckner *Symphony No. 8 (Nowak 1890 edition)*. BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Semyon Bychkov

TUESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER

PROM 66
7.30pm RAH
Rufus Wainwright arr. Sally Herbert and Maxim Moston *Want One*. Rufus Wainwright, BBC Concert Orchestra/Sarah Hicks

PROM 67
10.15pm RAH
Rufus Wainwright arr. Sally Herbert and Maxim Moston *Want Two*. Rufus Wainwright, BBC Concert Orchestra/Sarah Hicks

WEDNESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER

PROM 68
7.30pm RAH
Lera Auerbach *Sogno di Stabat Mater*, Corelli *Concerto Grosso in F, Op. 6 No. 2*, Tippett *Fantasia concertante on a Theme of Corelli*, Max Richter *Recomposed: Vivaldi – The Four Seasons*. Thomas Gould (violin), Britten Sinfonia/Thomas Gould

THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

PROM 69
7pm RAH
Mozart *Requiem; Ach, zu kurz ist unsers Lebenslauf; Masonic Funeral Music, K477; Miserere mei, K90; Thamos, King of Egypt – 'Ne pulvis et cinis'; Zwei Kirchenlieder – O Gottes Lamm, etc.* Erin Morley (soprano), Beth Taylor (mezzo-soprano), Lawrence Kilsby (tenor), Alex Rosen (bass), Pygmalion/Raphaël Pichon

PROM 69A
10.15pm RAH
Joanna Marsh *SEEN*, Daniel Lesur *Cantique des cantiques*, Soumik Datta *Awaaz*. Soumik Datta (sarod), BBC Singers/Sofi Jeannin

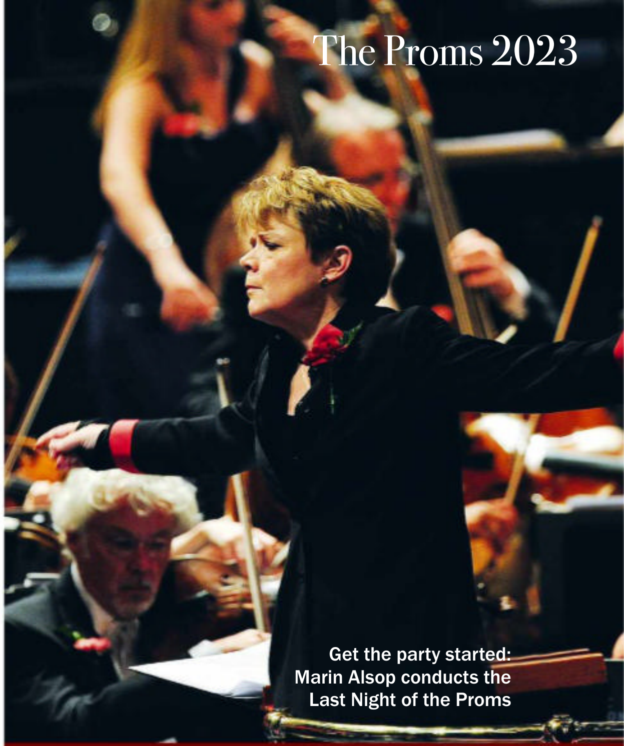
FRIDAY 8 SEPTEMBER

PROMS AT GREAT YARMOUTH
6pm **Great Yarmouth Hippodrome**
Dvořák *Carnival Overture*, Vaughan Williams *The Lark Ascending*, Sarah Rodgers *New work (commission)*, Walton *Crown Imperial*, Khachaturian *Masquerade – Waltz*, Stravinsky *Circus Polka*, Nino Rota *La Strada – main theme*, Rodgers, arr. Don Walker *Carousel Waltz*. Nathaniel Anderson-Frank (violin), BBC Concert Orchestra/ Anna-Maria Helsing

PROM 70
7.30pm RAH
Honegger *Rugby*, Rachmaninov *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Gabriela Ortiz *Clara (UK premiere)*, Bernstein *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*. Nobuyuki Tsujii (piano), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/Domingo Hindoyan

SATURDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

PROM 71: LAST NIGHT OF THE PROMS
7pm RAH
R Strauss *Don Juan*, Bruch *Kol Nidrei*, Walton *Coronation Te Deum*, James B Wilson *1922 (BBC commission: world premiere)*, Wagner *Tannhäuser – 'Dich, Teure halle'*, Mascagni *Cavalleria rusticana: Easter Hymn and Intermezzo*, Verdi *Macbeth – 'Vieni t'affretta'*, Coleridge-Taylor, arr. Simon Parkin *Deep River*, Kalman *The Gipsy Princess – 'Heia, heia, in den Bergen ist mein Heimatland'*, Trad., arr. Henry Wood *Fantasia on British Sea Songs*, Arne arr. Sargent *Rule, Britannia*, Elgar *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*, Parry, arr. Elgar *Jerusalem* Britten *The National Anthem*, Trad., arr. Paul Campbell *Auld Lang Syne*. Lise Davidsen (soprano), Sheku Kanneh-Mason (cello), BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Chorus & Orchestra/ Marin Alsop



Get the party started: Marin Alsop conducts the Last Night of the Proms

About Last Night...

Marin Alsop leads a Prom to remember

Marin Alsop is excited to be conducting this year's Last Night of the Proms. Excited, but not overawed. It will, in fact, be her third time leading the Proms' traditional closing extravaganza: the first came exactly a decade ago, when she made history as the Last Night's first female conductor. 'I'm thrilled to be working with Lise Davidsen and Sheku Kanneh-Mason, who's now a good friend and regular collaborator,' she enthuses. 'And it's always a big party – when people come to a concert expecting the best, there's always a great atmosphere.'

So, how do Alsop and the team go about putting together the programme for such a well-loved fixture? How much is bolted down already, and how much is up for discussion?

> 'It's always a big party and there's always such a great atmosphere'

'It's always a discussion and a negotiation,' she reveals. 'It depends on a few factors – what's been performed at other recent Last Nights, and who else is doing what at that year's Proms. But yes, there's a formula. For example, they always want an orchestral showcase, so I have picked Strauss's *Don Juan*. I thought that would show off the BBC Symphony really well. Then Sheku and I talk about what he would like to play...

'We also have an exciting premiere – James B Wilson's *1922*. After that, it's a potpourri of all your British hit tunes, right?' she says with a smile.

Happy memories of her first Last Night back in 2013? 'Fantastic memories. I've become a little bit fatigued by all the "first woman" stuff now, but being the first woman to do the Last Night of the Proms was terrifically exciting. It was so cute, because all the Prommers dressed up my podium with balloons and flowers saying, "It's a girl!"'

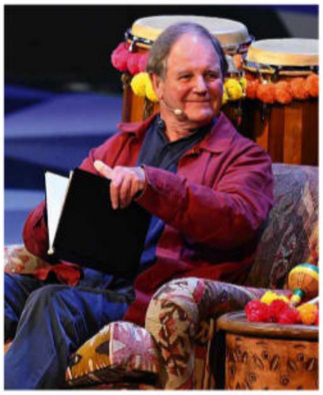
Prom 71, 9 September

GETTY, CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU, OLIVIA DA COSTA

Many happy returns: conductor Kwamé Ryan with the CBeebies team at the Proms in 2022

Once a Prom a time...

From Horrible Histories to Doctor Who, Clare Stevens takes a whistlestop tour of children's Proms through the last 30 years



'Children are welcome at the Proms, but in consideration of our audience and performer, children under the age of five are not allowed in the auditorium,' stated the 1996 edition of the BBC Proms prospectus, firmly. These days the wording is gentler: 'We recommend that children ... are aged five and over'. And there are two exceptions: the hour-long programme of music by Walton, Mozart, Rachmaninov and the Ukrainian composer Myroslav Skoryk given by Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra; and the Horrible Histories: 'Orrible Opera Prom, given by the chorus and orchestra of English National Opera.

Both are Relaxed Proms, a concept introduced in 2017, primarily for people with autism, sensory or communication impairments and learning disabilities, whatever their age. But they are also suitable for children and anyone who finds it difficult to stay still or silent for an extended period. The doors to the auditorium are left open so that audience members can come and go as they please, and there are 'chill-out' areas in the foyers for anyone who needs some quiet time before or during the performance – ideal for a family that has to bring a baby or toddler along to a concert aimed at its older siblings.

If you live in the north-east of England or south-east Scotland, you can even bring your toddler to a concert aimed especially at them, as part of the Proms at Sage Gateshead weekend. CBeebies: Ocean Adventure invites children

Voyages of discovery: (left) A Musical Trip to the Moon 2019; (below) Matt Baker and Konnie Huq of *Blue Peter* host The Family Prom in the Park 2005; (opposite below) author Michael Morpurgo narrates a Family Prom in 2021

aged up to five to 'search for endangered creatures, find out fascinating facts and collect sounds and pictures for your very own musical ocean scrapbook', led by BBC children's television presenters, with music performed by the Royal Northern Sinfonia, conducted by Kwamé Ryan.

Children's Proms are a surprisingly recent innovation. They do not feature in Nicholas Kenyon's *The Proms: A New History* until the 1990s; the issue of attracting younger audiences is discussed by David Wright in his chapter on 'The Sixties', but he means young adults, not children. It was another 30 years before Kenyon, taking over as controller in 1996 from John Drummond, began to make changes aimed partly at making the Proms feel more inclusive and representative. His first season ended with the first outdoor Prom in the Park, an event to which children can easily be brought; but it also included a Junior Prom on the last Monday afternoon of the season, entitled Around the World in Eighty Minutes. Actor and presenter Tony Robinson was the audience's guide on a lightning musical tour of the world, designed for children between the ages of six and 14 and with music performed by the New London Children's Choir and the BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by Ronald Corp.

Although this was part of the main season programme, it was not flagged up in the introductory pages of the prospectus at all. Nevertheless, it clearly found its audience, and

The first Junior Prom in 1996 was not flagged up in the introductory pages of the Proms Guide, yet it found its audience

the concept was repeated by the same forces the following year.

In 1998 there were two performances of a Blue Peter 40th Birthday Prom programme, introduced by the TV show's presenter Katy Hill, one for families and one for schools. The BBC Philharmonic performed works including Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*, Bach's 'Air on the G string' and extracts from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, Bizet's *Carmen* and Debussy's *La mer*, with conductor Yan Pascal Tortelier entering into the spirit of the event by assuming the role of Inspector Clouseau in the mystery plot that linked the different pieces.

This established a pattern for children's concerts linking standard classical repertoire to familiar television shows that has grown and evolved over the past three decades. Blue Peter Proms have focused on ancient Greek myths and on safaris; and in 2004 the Kagemusha Taiko drummers and a lion dance troupe from a Chinese school in central London joined the BBC Philharmonic to 'conjure up the spectacular sights and sounds of the Far East', reflecting a season theme built around a concert by cellist Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble.

The first Doctor Who Prom was in 2008, opening with Murray Gold's arrangement of the theme music from the series and including a specially filmed scene starring David Tennant, the incarnation of the Doctor at the time, as well as works such as Holst's 'Jupiter' from *The Planets* and the UK premiere of *The Torino Scale* by Mark-Anthony Turnage. By this time, the importance of concerts for younger audiences had been recognised, and the events were given much greater prominence in the Proms Guide.

'We've learnt that kids love the spectacle, the big orchestras, the noises and the humongous Royal Albert Hall,' wrote Clara Nissen in an essay in the 2010 guide. 'The recipe for success lies in short, contrasting and exciting pieces that show the breadth of classical music, all introduced by a friendly presenter. Then throw in the odd surprise…'

When I asked Facebook friends to share their memories of bringing their children to Proms as part of the research for this article, one of the best responses came from organist Timothy Noon, who recalled Blue Peter and Doctor Who Proms. His son in particular was a big *Doctor Who* fan. 'Did it work? Well, we're looking forward to seeing our daughter Molly [now a professional singer] in this year's Voces8 Prom on 9 August!'

Another friend remembered taking her children to one of the BBC Ten Pieces Proms,

BBC/GUY LEVY, CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU, GETTY

Tales from the past

Horrible Histories Proms

The first Horrible Histories Family Prom took place in 2011, inspired by the CBBC television series which itself is based on the books by Terry Deary (text) and Martin Brown (illustrations). Composer Richie Webb's songs from the TV show were interspersed with music by composers such as Henry VIII, Lully and Mozart, with actors from the cast joining the Aurora Orchestra and conductor Nicholas Collon.

This year, the Chorus and Orchestra of English National Opera conducted by Keri-Lynn Wilson will dive into 'Orrible Opera, introducing their young audience to dying divas and spellbinding sorceresses, ghosts, gypsies and generals as they uncover the stories behind some of opera's best-loved tunes in the company of characters from the TV series.

BBC Proms **Horrible Histories: 'Orrible Opera** takes place on Saturday 22 July, performed at 2pm (Prom 10) and again at 6pm (Prom 11) at the Royal Albert Hall, London; broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and on a later date on BBC TV.
CBeebies: Ocean Adventure at Sage Gateshead takes place on Sunday 23 July at 3pm in Sage One
Details at bbc.co.uk/proms

GETTY, ALAMY, BRIDGEMAN

Close encounters: a Cyberman invades the 2008 Doctor Who Prom, which Nigel Kennedy (right) launched by playing the theme tune; (above left) Henry VIII sings at the Horrible Histories Prom in 2011

introduced in 2015 to showcase the works that had been used as the basis for music in the primary curriculum over the previous academic year: 'They did extracts from *The Firebird* and had a dancer who flew through the audience. That was magical. But a more adult one which they loved was the cellist Abel Selaocoe's in 2021. Concerts don't necessarily need to have themes; children can be gripped by the music.'

A second set of Ten Pieces works aimed at secondary schools led to a showcase Prom in 2016; the choice of repertoire spanned everything from Haydn's Trumpet Concerto and Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* to pieces by living composers such as Gabriel Prokofiev's Concerto for Turntables and Orchestra and Anna Clyne's *Night Ferry*, while the presenters included singer Pixie Lott and former footballer Dion Dublin.

Broadening the scope still further to include the very youngest children and their families first happened in 2016, when the BBC Concert Orchestra played music representing dinosaurs, pirates, planets and stars in the first CBeebies Prom, A Journey Through Time and Space. And in 2019 the Chineke! orchestra and conductor Kwamé Ryan with a team of CBeebies presenters took children on a similar musical journey, 'providing them with the special powers they need to lift off into the universe'; there was a special appearance by the Clangers, and music included John Adams's *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*.

Marine biologist Rory Crawford, who has one secondary career playing in bands around his native Glasgow, and another as a CBeebies presenter, was part of the on-stage team at the Royal Albert Hall last year when Ocean Adventures was first performed. The concert was televised and can still be seen on iPlayer; and the programme has since been performed by different orchestras around the UK. Crawford says it is noticeable that the children in the audience have all watched the filmed concert as well as the many CBeebies songs available as standalone films on BBC iPlayer which means they are familiar with the material and keen to join in.

A parent of a six year-old and a four year-old himself, Crawford says CBeebies is still a trusted and popular brand, despite the plethora of children's programming now available on streaming channels. 'There's something so special about hearing our little songs performed by a real live orchestra, physically feeling the music...but they love the classical pieces as well.

'The motto of CBeebies is "everyone is welcome"', Crawford adds, 'and it's great that through these concerts we can include the Proms in that invitation.'

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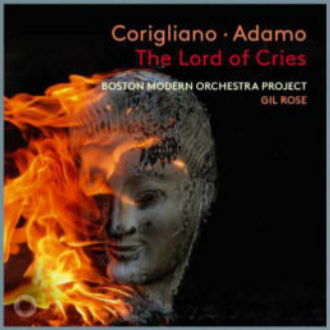

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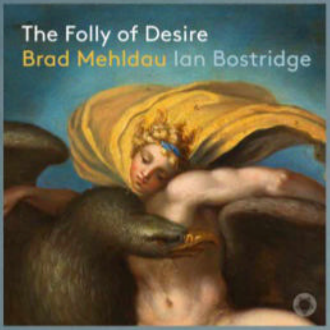

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THE BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

Eric Whitacre

The American composer shares with **Jeremy Pound** how writing a work that charts the death of a close friend from cancer took him into previously uncharted emotional territory

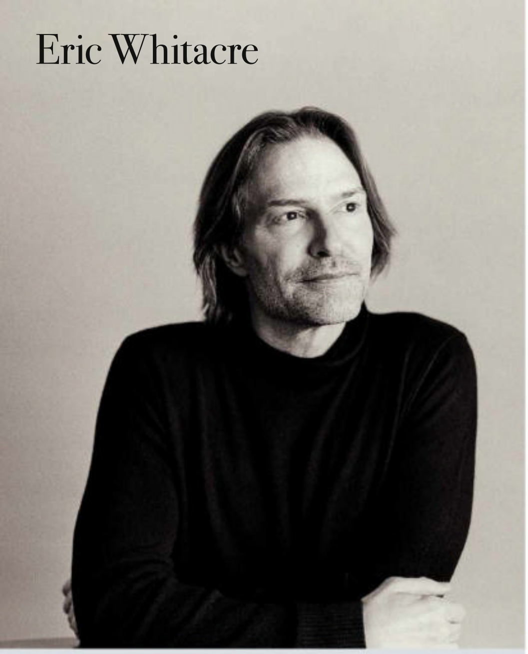
PHOTOGRAPHY: MARC ROYCE

It's not really the done thing to go into fan mode during an interview. You're there to do a job, so keep it professional – no autograph requests, no selfies. On this occasion, however, I'm going to make an exception. Midlife Choirsis, the choir I sing with in Cheltenham, has been learning one of Eric Whitacre's pieces. Would he be kind enough to film a quick message for them? 'Hey gang! Eric Whitacre here!' he beams into my phone. 'Midlife Choirsis – that's the best name I've ever heard! Thank you all so much for performing *Seal Lullaby*...' Why do I get the feeling he might have done this sort of thing once or twice before?

Conveniently, *Seal Lullaby* is on *Home*, Voces8's new album of Whitacre's music, about which we've to come to have a chat at Universal's offices in Kings Cross. However, while the *Lullaby* is indeed a classic example of the short, dreamy pieces that have made the 53-year-old Nevada-born composer the toast of countless choirs and listeners across the globe, there is a much weightier affair that I want to ask him about. Taking the lion's share of the same disc is *The Sacred Veil*, a 50-minute work for voices, cello and piano. By far the longest piece he has ever written, it also relives a time of sorrow.

'In my entire career as a composer, *The Sacred Veil* was a singular experience,' he tells me. 'I always try to be as thoughtful as possible and go as deep as I can into the text and the subject I am writing about – I have an actor friend who always calls me a "method composer" because I have to live something to write about it. However, nothing was quite like writing *The Sacred Veil*. The parts I found most difficult to set were Julie's own words. I hadn't realised what a good writer she was, and was wholly unprepared for the amount of emotion inside those words. There were times when I was openly weeping at my desk.'

The Julie in question is Julia Lawrence Silvestri, a close friend who died



Verbal allure: 'Words contain a magical path'

Sweet singing in the choir

The joy of writing for voices

Take a look through Eric Whitacre's published works, and you won't find much that isn't composed for choirs. 'I've done some orchestral pieces and some pieces for concert band, but that's pretty much it,' he agrees. 'I can't imagine not spending most of my time writing for choirs.'

So, what is it that makes choral music occupy his attention nearly every time? 'To me, nothing has the palette of colours like voices do – there is an endless richness of timbre. Partly, this is due to all the different sounds that the human voice can make, but it's also about the ways that a text can be set. The words themselves somehow contain within them a magical path to somewhere or something that I can't define.'

And part of the joys of being a choral composer, he says, is the challenge of combining words and music. 'The half-baked theory I have in my mind is that good music occupies a large part of your brain and good poetry occupies another, and if you get it right with the marriage of the two you kind of create this whole-brain experience. I think that's why I gravitate to choral music – it's the best of both disciplines.

'There's also nothing like the human voice to communicate emotional intelligence. There's already a huge amount of emotional information being passed from just a single person singing, and so when you get the aggregate of a whole choir, the audience gets washed up in the emotional colours that you simply can't get from any other instrument.'

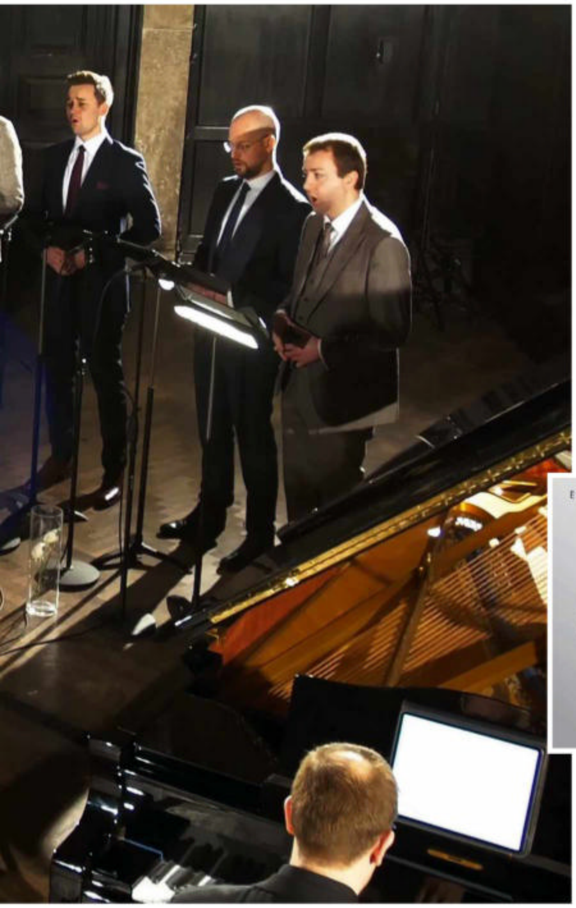
A scaled-down approach: Eric Whitacre records *The Sacred Veil* with Voces8, cellist Emma Denton and pianist Christopher Glynn

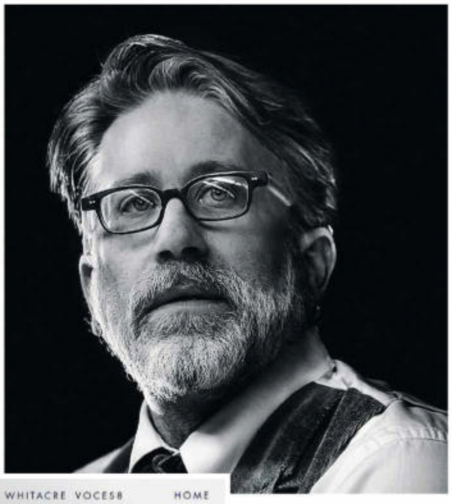
from ovarian cancer in 2005 at just 35. She was the wife of the author and poet Charles Anthony (Tony) Silvestri, a pal of Whitacre's since their days in the choir at the University Of Nevada and now a regular writing partner. Visiting Whitacre in Los Angeles after Julie died, Tony left 'The Veil Opens', a poem he had written about birth, death and eternity, lying on the composer's piano – not entirely by accident, one suspects. Whitacre read it, and the mental cogs started to whirr.

He and Tony then slowly, painstakingly put together a 12-movement piece that, using 'The Veil Opens' as its starting point, charts Julie's decline – sometimes poetically, sometimes through stark statements of fact – while also recalling the Silvestris' relationship. The words are by Tony and Julie, plus reflections from Whitacre himself. 'Initially, I was imagining the piece would be Tony's story,' he says. 'But it became clear that we needed to know Julie as well – as I've always believed in the axiom that you should show, not tell, that meant we needed to have her voice too. That changed everything, and they became co-pilots of the story, if you like.'

Tony's verbal craftsmanship has played a key role in his friend's finest moments over the years, including writing a Latin translation of a poem for *Lux Aurumque*, the Christmas piece from 2000 that later launched Whitacre's first Virtual Choir project (see below). And the equally popular *Sleep*, the piece sung by Virtual Choir 2, sets Silvestri's own poem.

Two minds working in happy harmony, then, though on one thing they differ fundamentally: Tony Silvestri is a devout Christian (as was Julie); Whitacre prefers to keep liturgical matters at arm's length. Given the deep expressions of faith in Julie's words in *The Sacred Veil*, might this have been an issue? 'It's true that I'm not a religious person,' he says. 'Since the beginning of Tony and my friendship, we've had hundreds of hours of conversations covering this subject from every angle. Ultimately, however, I think of what the composer Ned Rorem, a firm atheist, replied when he was asked why he set religious texts: "I believe in belief". That is so beautiful. Religious belief was the essence of what Julie was, so for me, my role as the illuminator of her words was to believe in the music itself.'





Behind *The Veil*: (left) writer Charles Anthony Silvestri, Whitacre's friend, colleague and inspiration; (below left) Voces8's new *Home* album

Non-believers setting religious texts is, we reflect, by no means a new phenomenon, with the likes of Vaughan Williams and Howells springing most instantly to mind. 'I so wish I could time-travel and ask Vaughan Williams, especially, how he reconciled all that, not least because he saw some really rough things in World War I,' says Whitacre. 'For me, often I find great wisdom and profound truths in religious texts, even if I don't believe them literally – at the very least there are people doing exactly what I am doing, which is searching for the answer. And so, I never wholly reject it.'

Home is not the first time that *The Sacred Veil* has appeared on disc, as Whitacre conducted the Los Angeles Master Chorale in the work's debut recording in 2019. The composer is again waving the baton on *Home*, but with much smaller forces in front of him – as the name implies, Voces8 consists of just two singers each on the soprano, alto, tenor and bass lines. Whitacre and the group had initially planned to come together just for a live performance in London, but twigging that they had something special going, decided to commit it all to tape as well.

MARC ROYCE, JOHN BURNS

It never hurts to keep an open mind, and Whitacre happily admits that listening to Voces8 taught him something about his own music. When he first started out on *The Sacred Veil*, he had in mind a score for ten instruments, solo soprano and chorus, which gradually got reduced as he followed his own mantra of 'simplify, simplify, simplify' – the instruments were whittled down to just cello and piano,

'Often I find great wisdom in religious texts, even if I don't believe them literally'

the soprano jettisoned. Everything he composes, he explains, is aimed at using the minimum means to create the greatest expression, but even he couldn't envisage *The Sacred Veil* being reduced any further. 'I had never imagined it would work with just eight voices! I thought that it needed this power of at least 40 singers, but with Voces8 it felt so much more intimate.' Ironic, given his working method, that it took someone else to pare his music right down to the bone? 'Ironic, yes, but true!'

Both Voces8 and LA Master Chorale are crack outfits who can tackle all manner of choral complexity. But where Whitacre excels above all is that much of his music can be tackled by all and sundry and still sound good. And, as I have discovered to my own pleasure, his individual vocal lines are satisfying even for bog-standard singers. 'My North Star as a composer is always "Is this singable?",' he says. 'I'm not a very good singer myself, and I sing through every one of my parts to see if, say, a phrase can be done in one breath. With each voice part in a simple piece like *Seal Lullaby*, I also try to give everybody a sense of line and a vocal arch that makes it feel rewarding to sing. And even with the more difficult pieces – where the music breaks into more parts and you might find yourself in the middle of a vocal cluster – I still try to make all the parts as logical as possible. I spend lots of time trying to refine those lines.'

The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and Whitacre explains how there are times when even this meticulous attention to detail proves not enough – if a choir struggles with a new score after a couple of run-throughs, he inevitably takes it back for a few tweaks. Perhaps the ultimate testing ground of the user-friendliness of his music, however, can be found in those Virtual Choir projects, in which thousands of participants record themselves singing a vocal part of one of his works and then send in the files to be edited together into a huge, multi-voice online performance. The first, of his *Lux Aurumque*, was launched in 2010. The most recent, featuring *Sing Gently* and put together during the first months of the pandemic, gathered together an astonishing 17,572 singers from across 129 countries.

Those 17,572 voices included Whitacre's older son, Esh. The composer himself admits, however, that he has never appeared in any of his Virtual Choirs. Has the creator of so much beloved choral music packed away his own bass voice for good? Well, possibly not. 'I miss singing,' he reveals. 'Next year, my wife Laurence and I will be moving to Belgium, and when we're settled, I'll try and find a choir. I have this fantasy about turning up anonymously, singing as part of the group and going for a beer afterwards.'

That all sounds rather lovely. And should Whitacre ever find himself in Cheltenham, he would be more than welcome to come and join the basses of Midlife Choirsis. I can't guarantee him his anonymity, though – I've shown them all that video on my phone.

A titan without ego

For many, conductor Otto Klemperer will be remembered as the steady and reliable champion of classic repertoire, but in his youth the German was a dashing advocate of the new, writes Andrew Green

Severe damage had been done to Klemperer's career, and the scene was being set for a 'Triumph Against All Odds' denouement

Do you scowl, as I do, at the phrase 'Based on a True Story'? So, the movie or TV company warmed to a real-life narrative sufficiently to want to bring it to the screen, but only if 'enhanced' by made-up stuff? Well, if any musical life-story offers more than enough by way of unvarnished, gripping truth to satisfy even the pickiest screenwriter, it's the one navigated by conductor Otto Klemperer.

The action would get under way (I reckon) in 1941, with Klemperer observed sneaking out of the New York psychiatric institution where he's long been held as a patient. He's been suffering from severe bipolar-related depression (a lifelong affliction), possibly triggered by the removal of a life-threatening brain tumour in 1939. A frantic search ensues. Klemperer is found, safe, two days later in New Jersey.

Severe damage has been done to Klemperer's career. His contract as music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra is cancelled. Precious little other high-level work is on offer. The scene is being set for, eventually, a 'Triumph Against All Odds' denouement in the shape of Klemperer's remarkable partnership with the Philharmonia Orchestra after World War II.

With Klemperer's struggles both with lifelong medical issues and professional setbacks, any movie-maker could keep the threat of imminent disaster in the dramatic equation as the plot unfolds. To start the gradual build-up of tension, though, requires a 'dissolve' flashback to the days when 'it all seemed to be going so *well*'.

Born into a musical family (in 1885, in an area of Prussia now in Poland), Klemperer received nothing but encouragement to make music his life. After piano and composition studies, he entered Mahler's orbit at the Vienna Court Opera in the early years of the 20th century. Impressed with his talents, Mahler wrote a testimonial which helped Klemperer gain a foot in the door as a conductor at the New German Theatre in Prague. 'He was so kind and helpful to young people,' was Klemperer's verdict on Mahler, 'although to the older generation he often seemed bad-tempered, and that's why they hated him.'

Klemperer worked his way through a range of conducting posts at German opera houses through and well beyond the years of World War I, the young firebrand's speciality being in championing the newest music, engaging in the whole production process. In 1927, the Prussian Ministry of Culture in Berlin sought to make the Kroll Opera a flagbearer for Germany's new status as a republic. As resident conductor, Klemperer was let loose to make a statement about contemporary opera through multiple performances, fully preparing productions and bedding them in. 'We gave only ten operas in nine months,' he recalled, 'repeating the performances very often. Here opera and drama were truly united.' Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Hindemith, Janáček and Weill were among the composers whose work was showcased, along with new takes on classic 18th- and 19th-century operas.

The 1920s and early '30s provide us with our first experience of Klemperer on disc. For anyone weaned on his late-life readings of Beethoven – craggily monumental and 'conservative' in tempo – his Staatskapelle Berlin orchestra recordings of Richard Strauss's *Don Juan* or 'Fêtes' from Debussy's *Nocturnes* may come as something of a shock, given their rhythmic drive and sense of heady excitement.

From bars to bars:
Otto Klemperer rehearsing with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, 1938; (opposite left) in New Jersey, prior to being returned to an asylum, 1941

GETTY, ALAMY

From firebrand to sage: (clockwise from right) the young Klemperer with Janáček, a composer he championed, in 1927; a set of his Staatskapelle Berlin recordings of the 1920s and '30s; conducting the Philharmonia in 1964

As our screenplay would doubtless play up, it was all going too well. The Kroll Opera experiment fell victim as early as 1931 to financial problems and a backlash from influential conservative cultural opinion. The company's closure was a body blow to Klemperer, to whom it was perhaps at least some comfort that the Kroll Opera's adventurous artistic legacy would have a significant influence around the opera world.

Worse was to come. In 1933, Klemperer fled Germany with his wife (the operatic soprano Johanna Geisler) and their two children. His longstanding conversion to Roman Catholicism (for his marriage in 1919) was no defence against the Nazi Party's rabid intolerance of Jewish blood.

As happened with many 20th-century musical émigrés, the US offered refuge and a fresh start. Orchestral concerts, formerly a lesser priority, now became Klemperer's bread-and-butter. Around his music directorship of the Los Angeles Philharmonic came opportunities with orchestras such as the Pittsburgh Symphony and the New York Philharmonic (whose players enraged him by backing John Barbirolli to become music director from 1937). Something of a dramatic fault-line was crossed in repertoire terms, and familiar classical Germanic music became much more the focus – although his championing of Mahler and Bruckner in fact broke new ground for many American concertgoers.

Then the brain tumour and the plunge into manic depression. Again, the need to rebuild his career. Europe beckoned. The appointment in 1947 to Hungarian State Opera as music director led to one of the happiest periods of Klemperer's career. However, the artistic freedom he so relished was eventually reined in by Communist party interference. Now began an extended period in which Klemperer held no permanent position. He picked up guest conducting as far afield as Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada and France – but it was to be London, via music producer Walter Legge and his brainchild Philharmonia Orchestra, which offered Klemperer a famously golden Indian summer in terms not just of memorable concerts but a staggering late harvest of recordings.

The mercurial Legge, head of EMI's A&R, had snared one Herbert von Karajan to conduct the Philharmonia on a regular basis. However, when in 1954 the Berlin Philharmonic wooed Karajan back to Germany as chief conductor on the death of Wilhelm Furtwängler, Legge turned increasingly to Klemperer.

With Furtwängler gone and Arturo Toscanini retired, there was a gap in the market for an elder statesman able to direct authoritative readings of classical Austrian-German repertoire as a major (if not exclusive) selling-point. After progressively demonstrating that the cap fitted, Klemperer was invited in 1959 to become the Philharmonia's first principal conductor. The re-invention was complete – from dashing, dynamic champion of all that was new to earnest seeker after the eternal truths hidden in classic repertoire.

However, it wouldn't be Otto Klemperer without mishaps along the way to defer the movie-maker's climactic triumph. In 1951, for example, Klemperer slipped on ice at Montreal Airport and fractured his femur, resulting in a long period off the podium. In October 1958, the now 73-year-old maestro nodded off while smoking his pipe in bed. He woke to find the bedclothes alight. In his confusion, he tipped something highly flammable onto the flames instead of water (was it camphor medication for his chest... or whisky??). Imagine that episode in lurid Technicolor. Recovery from severe burns cost him almost a year.

Over the years, Klemperer offered Philharmonia followers his Bach, Mozart (a little uncharacterful for some), magisterial Beethoven, Brahms, plus performances of Mahler and Bruckner which helped give their music a new

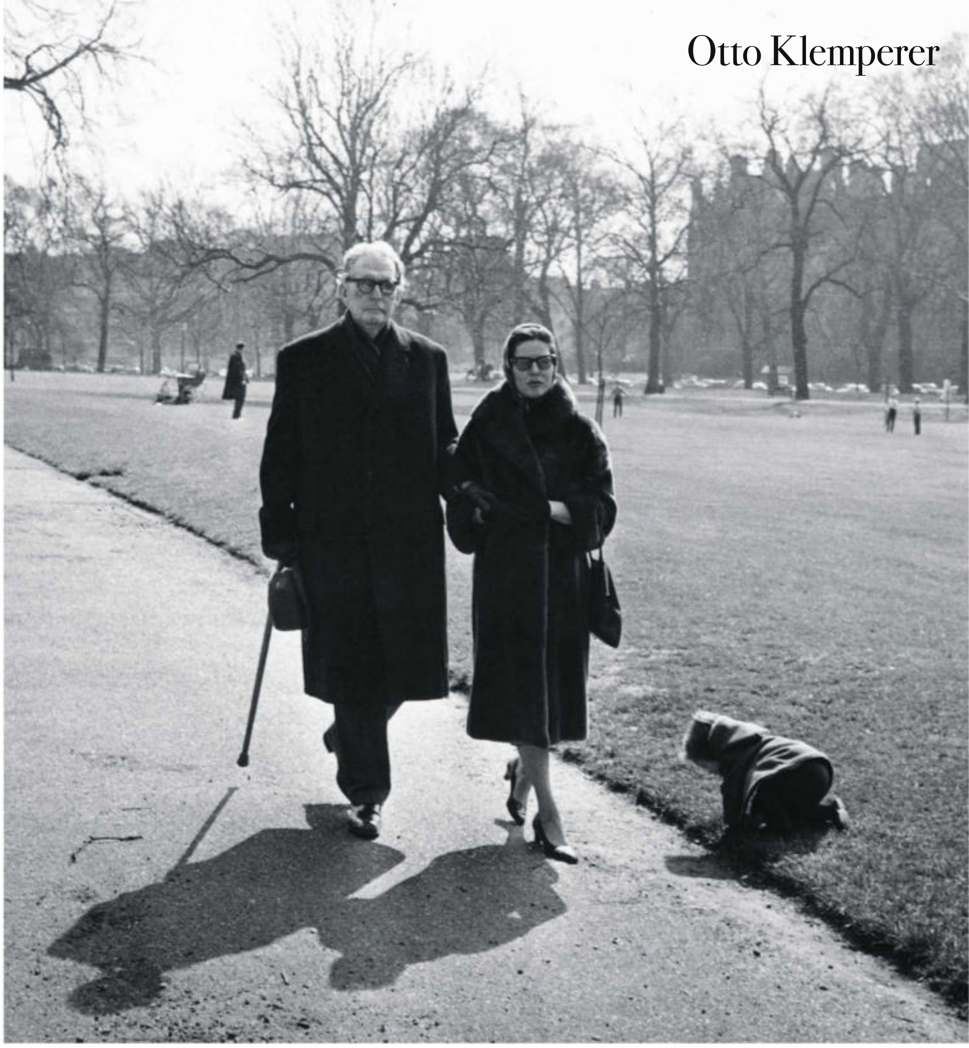
Otto Klemperer live

A concert-goer's view

I caught Klemperer near the end of his career, when he had become the wise Old Testament prophet of his latter days. I attended 36 of his London visits to the concert hall and opera house between 1963 and his last concert in 1971. On a good night, the experience was electrifying, which made his occasional off nights all the more perplexing.

At six foot six inches, he was a towering figure on the podium, even while seated. A curt nod of acknowledgement before and after a concert was all we got – in between, his clenched right fist and fluttering left hand performed their magic. Watching him, I felt he had more control without the baton, which he decided to take up again in 1967 for a recording of Mahler's Ninth Symphony; yet he possessed a magnetism which held orchestra and audience in thrall. Sometimes, he appeared not to conduct at all but merely to preside over the orchestra, completely absorbed in the score. But nothing was taken for granted; every crotchet had been thoroughly rehearsed.

After each concert, we fans waited at the artists' entrance for a last glimpse as he was shuffled out, supported by his daughter Lotte, and chauffeured away into the night. *Terry Williams*



A love for London: (right) Klemperer walks with his daughter Lotte in Hyde Park, 1964; (below) pianist and conductor András Schiff says he has discovered and reveres Klemperer through the German's recordings

stature. Mahler's time had come, he reckoned. 'I think after two world wars,' he said, 'one feels more the uncertainty, the questioning enshrined in his music. We understand its schizophrenia.' Often overlooked, though, are his offerings of Bartók and Berlioz, Dvořák and Tchaikovsky.

The Philharmonia players adored Klemperer. When Legge dissolved the orchestra in 1964, the musicians reformed it as a self-governing entity, The New Philharmonia, and unanimously voted in Klemperer as chief conductor. The recordings continued to flow. Pianist Sir András Schiff has only accessed Klemperer's music-making via these and video, but this has been enough to make the maestro 'one of my musical heroes. Whenever I want to hear a really great piece of music, Klemperer never disappoints. He has no vanity whatsoever, no ego. He lets the composer and the work speak. He doesn't "interpret".'

The man himself suggested that a key element in his approach was to ensure that his bowing and dynamic markings were inserted into the orchestral parts by the Philharmonia librarian prior to rehearsals. Even so, as someone who vividly recalls as a teenager watching Klemperer conduct Beethoven on BBC television – seated, gaunt face bled of all expression, shaky beat – I'm dying to ask one-time Philharmonia violinist Martyn Jones just how the musical magic was transmitted to the players. 'Like all the great conductors,' he says, 'it was down to pure personality. You only had to glance up and you knew what he wanted. He had the ability to conduct at a slow tempo yet never let the music drag. There are conductors who make you think of someone driving at breakneck speed through beautiful countryside... which is never taken in. With Klemperer, you examined every blade of grass. At his tempos you heard every note and every nuance. If people only listen to his recordings with fresh ears they'll hear so much more of the music.'

The litmus test was the electricity generated in the concert hall, says Jones. 'The standing ovation he received in the Festival Hall, I think for a Mahler performance with us, was like nothing I'd seen before. They went berserk at a Paris concert we gave... simply when he came on.'

The desire to communicate through great music is surely the central reason why Klemperer ploughed on through all the setbacks. Yet the selfless work of his daughter Lotte, as everything from personal secretary to nurse, was vital to keeping the show on the road. Jones describes her as Klemperer's 'total mainstay'. The conductor and musicologist Antony Beaumont

GETTY, NADIA F ROMANINI

'In my mind, there's no question he is one of the greatest, a shining example of humility and integrity'

expressed the opinion that, 'The miracle of Otto Klemperer's late flowering as an international conductor was largely her achievement.'

That late flowering culminated in Klemperer's last concert as a conductor – of Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms – with his beloved Philharmonia in the Royal Festival Hall on 26 September 1971. He had no intention of retiring that night. However, this time there was no answer to medical complications. In the embrace once more of the Jewish faith, Klemperer died in Switzerland, where he had long been settled, in July 1973. His obituary in *The Times* summed up the hallmarks of his conducting as its 'spacious, perfectly proportioned architecture, strength and intensity and inner radiance of sonority, majesty of line.'

Cue closing credits. But not before a last word from András Schiff. 'Seeing Klemperer conduct on film makes me wonder what conducting really is about. There's nothing to "watch". There's no choreography. And yet his presence is overwhelming. I'm afraid that in today's musical world, where most people are not listening but watching, Klemperer would not be making a great career. But in my mind, there's no question about it. He's one of the greatest. A shining example of humility and integrity.'

A heroic enterprise: members of the all-female Zohra Orchestra in Kabul, prior to being banned

The fight to be heard

Exiled from their homeland by the Taliban, Afghan musicians are striving to promote a rich musical heritage, writes Simon Broughton

A subject close to the heart: conductor Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey champions Afghan music

'Afghanistan has a very rich musical heritage and with music we can tell stories that not many people are brave enough to talk about,' says Afghan cellist-composer Meena Karimi. In March 2021, she premiered *Dawn*, her piece for cello and orchestra, with the National Orchestra of Afghanistan. '*Dawn* represents the struggle and strength of women and girls in Afghanistan,' she says. 'Afghan women had to fight for their basic human rights or to participate equally in the country that they are part of. With music we have the opportunity to share both sides of the story, the beauty and the struggle.'

What Karimi didn't foresee was that, five months after that Kabul premiere on International Women's Day, she and all the musicians of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) would be struggling to get out of the country in those chaotic scenes at Kabul International Airport after the Taliban returned to power in August of that same year.

Karimi, now 16, was one of the lucky ones as she had already been awarded a place to study at Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, where she's now based. Other members of ANIM failed even to get into Kabul Airport when a plane was first sent from Qatar to evacuate them. However, the last students and teachers of ANIM were finally able to fly out in November 2021. They have been given asylum in Portugal and are currently hosted by the conservatoire in Braga.

Afghanistan does indeed have a fertile musical heritage, thanks to its geographical location at a place where three important musical cultures meet: that of South Asia (India and Pakistan), Central Asia (Uzbekistan) and the Persian-speaking world (Iran and Tajikistan). All these cultures have rich folk and classical traditions which have influenced the tapestry of Afghan

A lively and diverse heritage: (right) cellist-composer Meena Karimi sends a message; (below) Ahmad Zahir, 'The Afghan Elvis', who thrived in 1970s Afghanistan

music. While 'art music' developed in the large cities like Kabul and Herat, it was really through radio following the Second World War that modern Afghan music developed.

From the 1960s, Radio Afghanistan acted as a kind of conservatoire where music was composed, performed, popularised and archived. The radio was also important as a unifying factor in a country riven by ethnic division, particularly between the two main groups, the Dari- (or Farsi-) speaking Afghans and the Pashto-speaking Pashtuns. In the 1970s, Afghanistan – and Kabul in particular – enjoyed a lively and diverse musical environment. On the one side, Mohammad Omar (1905-80), working in radio, became the most celebrated virtuoso on the country's national instrument, the plucked *rubab* and, on the other, Ahmad Zahir (1946-79), known as the 'Afghan Elvis', became the country's biggest pop star with his Western-oriented hits.

This all changed after the communist coup of 1978 and the subsequent Soviet invasion. The Americans backed the anti-Soviet mujahideen fighting an Islamic religious war against the communists. Music got caught in the crossfire of all the subsequent regimes. The Soviets restricted the country's Sufi musicians with their message of mystical Islam, but other music was promoted as long as it supported the regime. An estimated six million Afghans went into exile.

When the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the country endured a brutal civil war between rival mujahideen groups. With their conservative Islamic views, restrictions were placed on music, notably on women singers and music for dancing. This became far more extreme when the Taliban seized most of the country in 1996 and imposed the strictest ban on music there has ever been. Musicians faced a stark choice: shut up or get out. TV was banned, and Radio Sharia, as it was called, was limited to unaccompanied religious and patriotic chanting. Women were required to cover up and were banned from education.

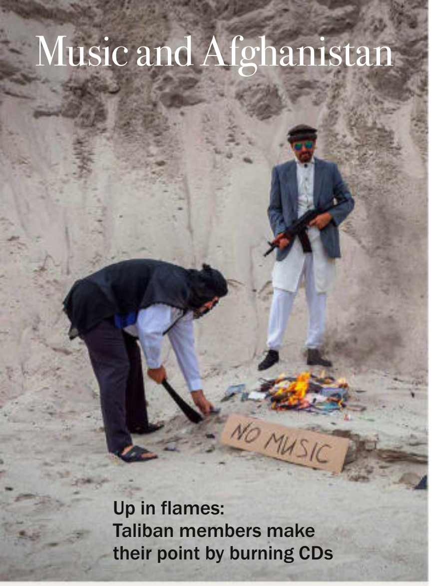
Following the defeat of the Taliban in 2001, music was again permitted and encouraged for 20 years. There were concerts, women eventually performed again on stage and on TV, including on the hugely popular talent show *Afghan Star* that ran from 2005, and music schools were established. The Aga Khan Music Programme established schools in Kabul and Herat in 2003, the Music Faculty was re-started at Kabul university, and ANIM – the largest music school, teaching both Western and Afghan music – was established by Dr Ahmad Sarmast in 2010. Its all-female Zohra Orchestra toured widely, including the US and Europe and a high-profile performance at Davos in 2017, although in Afghanistan there were still forces hostile to the enterprise. Sarmast survived two bomb attacks and was accused by the Taliban of 'corrupting the youth of Afghanistan'.

From the 1960s, Radio Afghanistan acted as a conservatoire and an important unifying factor in a country riven by ethnic division

Alaska-born conductor Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey admired the work of Negin Khpalwak, conductor of the Zohra Orchestra; after seeing them at work in Kabul, she arranged an invitation to the whole orchestra to do a residency in Oxford. 'I'm not an expert in traditional Afghan music,' Ponchione-Bailey admits. 'I come to this from a desire to celebrate global orchestral practices, which are now incredibly diverse and no longer centered in Germany or Austria.'

In June this year, she is conducting the Oxford Philharmonic in a programme of Afghan orchestral music by nine composers, including Meena Karimi's *Dawn* and music by Ghafar Maliknezhad. Born in Afghanistan in 1987, Maliknezhad grew up in exile in Iran and only started studying music aged 20 when his family returned to Afghanistan. 'I had a deep sense of love for my homeland and music seemed a way to express this,' he says. 'I had absolutely no experience of music before Kabul University, but the programme was designed for people with no musical background.' Playing piano, he took a four-year intensive course, including Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven and some jazz. The Oxford concert will include his

COURTESY OF MEENA KARIMI, JAMES BERRYMAN FOR SPITALFIELDS MUSIC FESTIVAL, GETTY



Up in flames: Taliban members make their point by burning CDs

Instrument of evil

The Taliban and music

After their return to power in August 2021, the Taliban once again announced a ban on music in public because it was 'un-Islamic'. Despite what the Taliban say, there's nothing in the Quran that explicitly forbids music. There are sophisticated Islamic music traditions in Indonesia, Central Asia, across the Persian, Turkic and Arabic world and into north and west Africa. Iran, the most proscriptive regime after Afghanistan, still forbids female singers performing to mixed audiences.

The Taliban argue that music – citing in particular romantic songs and dancing – is a distraction from God. Under the previous Taliban regime, the only music permitted on Radio Sharia was unaccompanied patriotic songs and religious chants. In Kabul, Rahmatullah, a Muslim cleric but not a Taliban member, outlined to me his objections to music: 'If a Muslim or righteous man spends ten days with a gambler, he will himself begin to gamble. So *tanbur* and other musical instruments will lead him to immorality. Personally, I believe they are all instruments of evil. From an Islamic point of view, *tanbur*, harmonium, tabla and TV are all instruments of shame.'

JAMES BERRYMAN FOR SPITALFIELDS MUSIC FESTIVAL, GETTY, ALAMY

Songs of a refugee: Elaha Soroor performs with Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey in London, 2022

orchestral arrangement of one of Afghanistan's most popular patriotic songs, 'Da Zamong Zeba Watan' (Our Beautiful Homeland). 'Many versions of this song exist and that's why I was eager to arrange it for orchestra,' he says.

Teaching at Kabul University, Maliknezhad received an invitation from Weimar University; he escaped the country with his wife and two daughters overland into Pakistan in February 2022. He's now based in Munich, Germany.

> 'I need to fight for those who've had their voices stolen and their rights taken by force'

Most of his pieces are arrangements of popular Afghan songs, including one of Ahmad Zahir's Pashto hits 'Oba Derta Rowrom'.

Another Afghan musician to be featured in the Oxford concert is Elaha Soroor – a pseudonym, meaning 'Goddess of Happiness', to protect her family at home. She arrived in Britain as a refugee in 2012 and released an award-winning album called *Songs of our Mothers* in 2019. The songs are by, or associated with, Afghan female singers in contemporary arrangements. She has also been creating music for *The Boy with Two Hearts* by Hamed Amiri (Wales Millennium Centre and National Theatre), and *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri (currently on tour). Soroor's composition *Baran* comes out of the music for *The Boy with Two Hearts*, portraying a dangerous voyage across many countries to reach the UK. 'The composition represents the journey of refugees who cross many lands and borders, picking up elements of culture and tradition along the way,' she says. 'In that sense, this piece is the culmination of my own personal journey through the world.'

Ponchione-Bailey loves the dynamism of the music. 'The orchestral music of Afghanistan has never been successfully colonised,' she says. 'The rhythmic vitality of the 7/8 time is so common in Afghanistan and so uncommon in Western music. If I'm teaching European or American conductors they are locked into 4/4, 3/4 and maybe a good old 6/8. But these mixed meters are in the Afghans' blood – it's like drinking water for them.' But beyond the music there's also a subtext: 'I really hope it sends a message that these Afghans are welcome here, that we honour and respect their traditions; and that this mix of Western and Afghan instruments is not only a beautiful thing but is something that everybody can appreciate.'

For now, Afghan music will have to grow as best it can in exile. That is a difficult task, but 16-year-old Karimi is prepared to embrace it. 'Every day I need to fight for those people who've had their voices stolen and their rights taken away by force. Every day it gives me more strength to wake up early in the morning and say I can do it and I should stand up for my friends back in Afghanistan. Every day, in fact every minute they are always in my mind.'

The Oxford Philharmonic's Orchestral Music of Afghanistan concert takes place on 15 June at the Sheldonian Theatre. Details: oxfordphil.com

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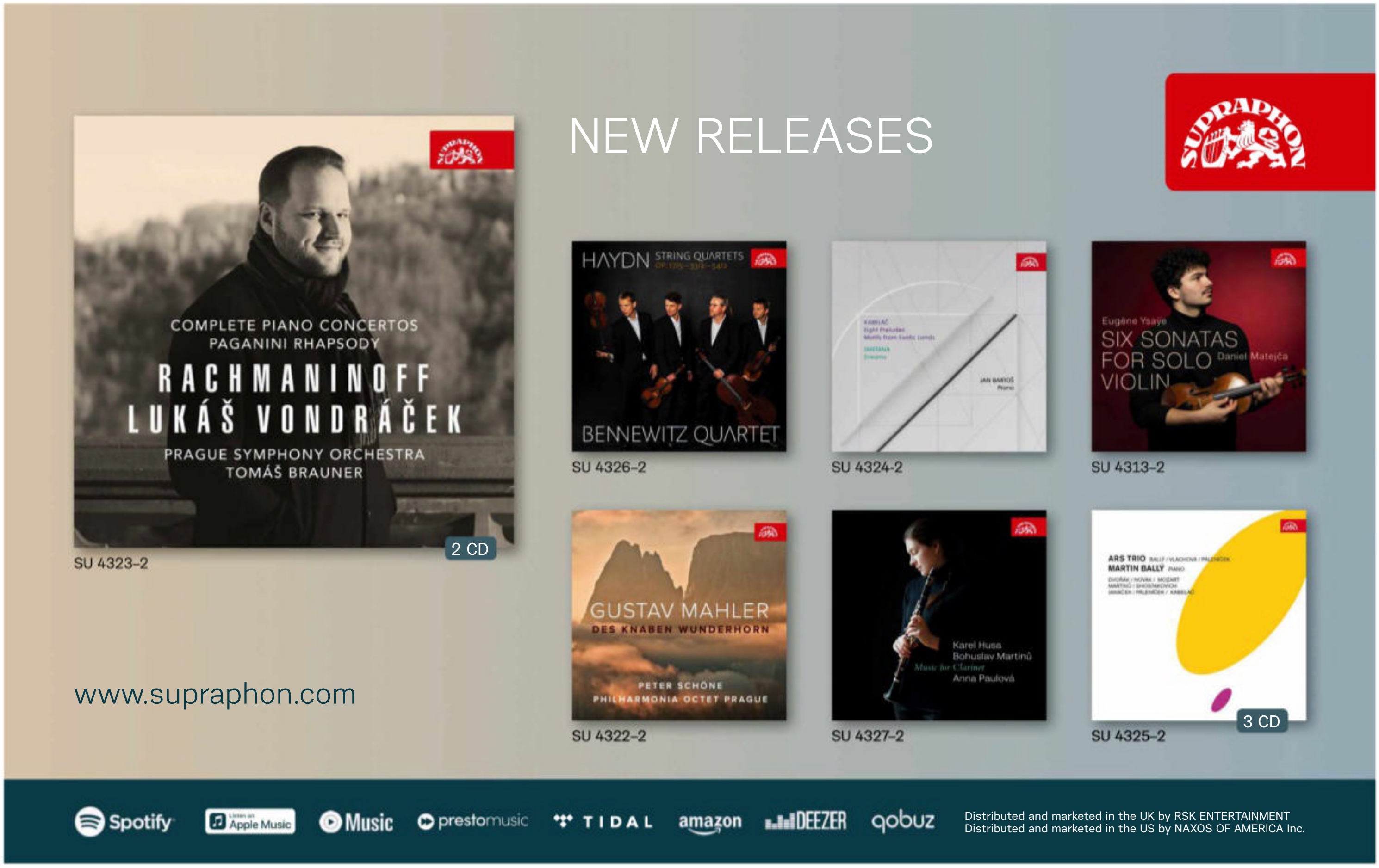
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Hidden treasures

After spending two decades searching the archives for neglected operas, conductor Charles Peebles recalls the risks and challenges of bringing them to the stage

Choosing an opera wisely was crucial. We all had to live by that choice and had to be able to cast the piece

Between 2001 and '22, I was tasked with finding a 'rarely performed' opera on an annual basis for University College Opera's yearly production in March. The invitation to take down a piece from the shelf that few, if any, had ever seen, then putting it on the stage, must count as one of the most desirable assignments one could have. The model was professional principal cast, director, designer, plus student chorus and orchestra, for four performances in University College London's Bloomsbury Theatre.

Choosing the piece wisely was crucial. We all had to live by that choice. The students needed the right level of stimulation and challenge; you had to be able to cast the piece. There ideally ought to be some whiff of topicality or point of interest in that selection that caused it to edge ahead of other possible pieces one might have lighted upon at the time. So how much of a downside lay in that characterisation of 'rarely performed' opera? Was this obligation to investigate opera's reject pile a restriction? What lay there, and what was it that caused an opera to find itself in the 'rarely performed' category?

The pieces that sit at the top table of operatic celebrity might be said to deserve their place there, fighting their corner with every rehearsal or performance, reminding us of those qualities that earned that reputational impregnability. Additionally, any company planning a season of opera will have to present the usual suspects – the Mozart, the Verdi, the Puccini, the Wagner, the Richard Strauss and, in today's money, the Britten, the Handel and the Janáček too – before you can talk about less familiar repertoire clawing a place for itself. So, the odds are well stacked against any unfamiliar piece hauling itself up the ratings and into that established operatic Premier League. In that 20-year quest for real quality among the unfamiliar, a number of possible reasons that hold an opera's progress back began to emerge.

Perhaps the most brutal was a simple failure to launch. If the opera had never been test driven

in the first place, that was always going to set things back. Lalo's *Fiesque* only received its world premiere in 2007, the year before we performed it. Schubert never got to hear any of his operas – an occupational hazard of dying at 31, you might say. If an opera didn't spend time in front of an audience, it would not acquire a reputation of any sort – good, bad or indifferent – which suggested it scarcely merited subsequent investigation.

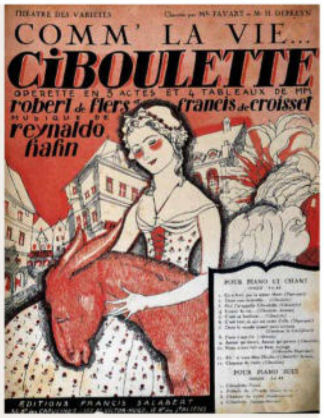
There is also the phenomenon of local celebrity – operas cherished in a certain territory, but that simply don't travel. Rimsky-Korsakov's stature as an opera composer is still only now emerging from Russia, where it has been long acknowledged. Two specific European examples come to mind. The first, Smetana's grand

JOHN READING PHOTOGRAPHY, GETTY

Restored to former greatness: (above) *La favorite*, revived by Charles Peebles in 2016; Donizetti, its composer; (far left) a costume design for Smetana's *Libuše*, an opera with superb music

opera *Libuše*, regularly performed in the Czech speaking world but scarcely seen elsewhere, was suggested to us by Brian McMaster, who had presented a concert performance at the Edinburgh Festival. The subject matter is perhaps 'too Czech' to travel as it does speak to the card-carrying Czech nationalist first and foremost, but the music is hugely powerful, so the world has been missing out.

Another example of intense association with a place was Reynaldo Hahn's *Ciboulette*, whose absence from the repertoire seemed inexplicable to music critic Michael Kennedy back in 2003. We recruited an all-French principal cast, sufficiently Gallic for him to observe that we had 'entered into the spirit of the piece as if



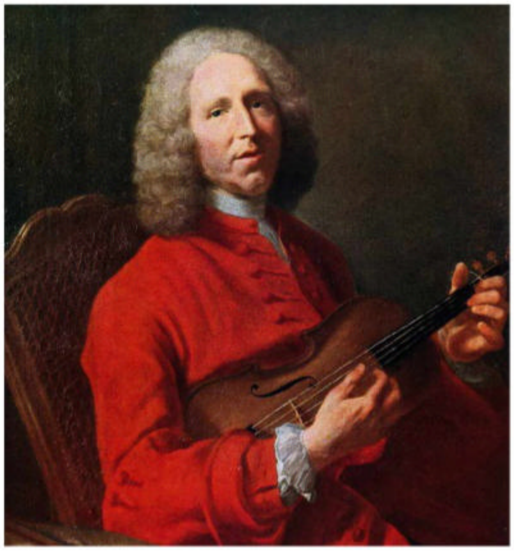
Lost in translation

Does language matter?

So, you have settled upon an unusual opera to spring upon an unsuspecting audience. Will you perform it in its original language or in a translation?

In 1982, when I was a conducting fellow at Tanglewood, I remember Erich Leinsdorf insisting you should never conduct a piece in a language you didn't speak, which would have left me with just some ropey French and Italian. Today's opera-goer doesn't need a translation to get them through *Carmen* or *La traviata*, but what about the less familiar or totally unknown? Are you giving the audience a helping hand singing in translation? Or, by removing the work from the sounds of the language the composer would have heard, are you uprooting it from the imaginative universe unique to every language and misrepresenting it at a vulnerable moment of its performing history?

In the 20-or-so operas I did with University College Opera, there were a few translations, sometimes because there was a good one to hand, or the prospect of Russian or Czech was too daunting. Once, casually chatting with students, to my pleasant surprise it emerged their view was that not to perform in the original language was to miss out on a central factor in the whole adventure of opera.



Trapped in time?: (right) Gabrielle Krauss as Pauline in Gounod's *Polyeucte* in its original 1878 production; (left) sheet music for Hahn's opera *Ciboulette*; (below) Rameau, composer of the long-forgotten *Acante et Céphise*

they were Yvonne Printemps and Sacha Guitry'. *Ciboulette* enjoyed a tremendous run of success in France between the two world wars, virtually vanishing since.

Ciboulette had something of the Sleeping Beauty syndrome, for as in Tchaikovsky's ballet, the story has ceased by the start of the final act. That never held Tchaikovsky's work back, though perhaps the opera audience expects more. In Rameau's magnificent *Acante et Céphise*, written to celebrate the birth of the Dauphin in 1751, the story also ceases by the final act, which turns into a paean of praise for the French royal family. Our staging, apparently the first since 1766, might have been of less significance had a planned recording of *Acante* taken place some years earlier – with that recording, perhaps *Acante* might well have gone round the world by now. Which brings up another reality the rarely performed opera has to contend with. Musicologist Hugh MacDonald wrote in an article about Saint-Saëns's many operas, most of which we are unlikely to be seeing anytime soon, that the most useful thing would be for recordings to be made of them. That alone might not convey the full package that the addition of visuals might, but it can perhaps give an anxious promoter resolve in their decision making.

If the truncated plot might cause a reviving hand to hesitate, what of the subject matter itself? Several operas involve conflict with the Muslims, variously handled according to libretto and era. I recall holding off Schubert's *Fierrabras*, wondering how that might play now. Conversely, there is a huge Christian propaganda to Gounod's *Polyeucte*, whose UK premiere we gave in his centenary year. Gounod was well known for his Christian conviction, and his opera is based on a Pierre Corneille play of 1642 concerning the conversion and martyrdom of Polyeucte. Now the opera, as the press in 2018 commented, is a pacy, dramatic piece, with a powerful love triangle, rich ensembles, and thrilling choruses whose absence from the repertoire is harder to explain than most. For a modern secular audience, the Christians can just become 'any zealous sect', completely unburdened by the perceived baggage of Christianity, and then the opera can race ahead with a very strong story that all can identify with. Opera from the pulpit, *Polyeucte* certainly needn't be.

There is of course not only territorial popularity, but era popularity too. When we performed Donizetti's *La favorite*, it had had only three British productions in the entire 20th century – astonishing, given its tremendous track record in earlier times, with no less a figure than Toscanini declaiming its stature from the rooftops. Similarly, Weber/Mahler's *Die drei Pintos* once led a healthier life than it does now. Is there a suspicion that if a piece's fortunes lapse in one era that its fortunes cannot revive in a subsequent one?

When we did *La favorite* we had a spanking new scholarly edition which definitely helped. Such things do, and we were equally fortunate that Hugh Macdonald's superb edition of Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* emerged just as we were doing that magnificent opera, which had always previously been considered an editorial can of worms. If a would-be performer has to cope with poor performing material, that is never going to help. I was told by a publisher that the only material for Gounod's *Philémon et Baucis* was unfit for use, leading to the inevitable

Scene and heard: Schubert's *Alfonso und Estrella* in the 2006 production conducted by Charles Peebles; (below) Robert Mellon as Bloch's Macbeth

conclusion that we were looking at what had become a 'lost piece'.

Mendelssohn's incomparable comedy *Die Hochzeit des Camacho* nearly disappeared completely, courtesy of the Royal Air Force, who raided Leipzig during the Second World War. Musicologist Clive Brown skilfully restored the performing material and the world is lucky to have it. This wonderful piece illustrates something else to that can stand in the way of a work's success: the composer. Mendelssohn could be awkward about his music. Consider how after the anticipation of writing his 'Reformation' Symphony No. 5, and conducting its first performance, he took against it, so it was not performed again or published until after his death. It looks as though he took against *Camacho* in a similar manner, doing nothing to energise its fortunes after its first performances in 1827.

Do we think of Mendelssohn as not an opera composer? If so, is that a prejudice that might extend to others? Particularly vulnerable to that perception are those figures who wrote only one opera. Leading this particular parade is, of course, Beethoven, composer of a single opera, probably the greatest outlay of effort in a single work in his career, resulting in a work whose stature is beyond challenge but which is thought not to be entirely operatic.

GETTY, BRIDGEMAN

Bloch's *Macbeth* is a full-on setting of Shakespeare with tremendous roles for the Macbeths themselves

Do we regard composers of a single opera in the same way as repeat creators? Schumann's *Genoveva* is certainly a wonderful piece, but perhaps missing something of the operatic gene in its DNA. A piece well worthy of revival by another single-opera composer is Bloch's *Macbeth*, a full-on setting of Shakespeare's play with tremendous roles for the Macbeths themselves. It's an ambitious piece by a man in his twenties which fully rises to the occasion. Does his failure to return to opera in a long subsequent career cause this substantial piece to be overlooked? Bloch's *Macbeth* was written in French in the first decade of the 20th century. He went back to the piece in the 1950s, replacing the French with an English text very close to the Shakespeare – a heartening example of an older composer revalidating his younger self, as well as giving this powerful work an astonishing immediacy to an English-speaking audience.

In those 20-plus years of staging neglected operas, we never produced a dud in purely musical terms. As I reflected at the beginning of this piece, those operas at the top deserve their place, tested as they are every day of their lives. Yet what lies a bit further upstream needs to be seen and heard to compete. You never really know whether you have a masterpiece on your hands until you've strung it together and put it in front of an audience.

Making Tracks

Composer, synth player and Radio 3 presenter, Hannah Peel is forging a multi-faceted career while also giving crucial breaks to fellow musicians, as she tells Tom Stewart

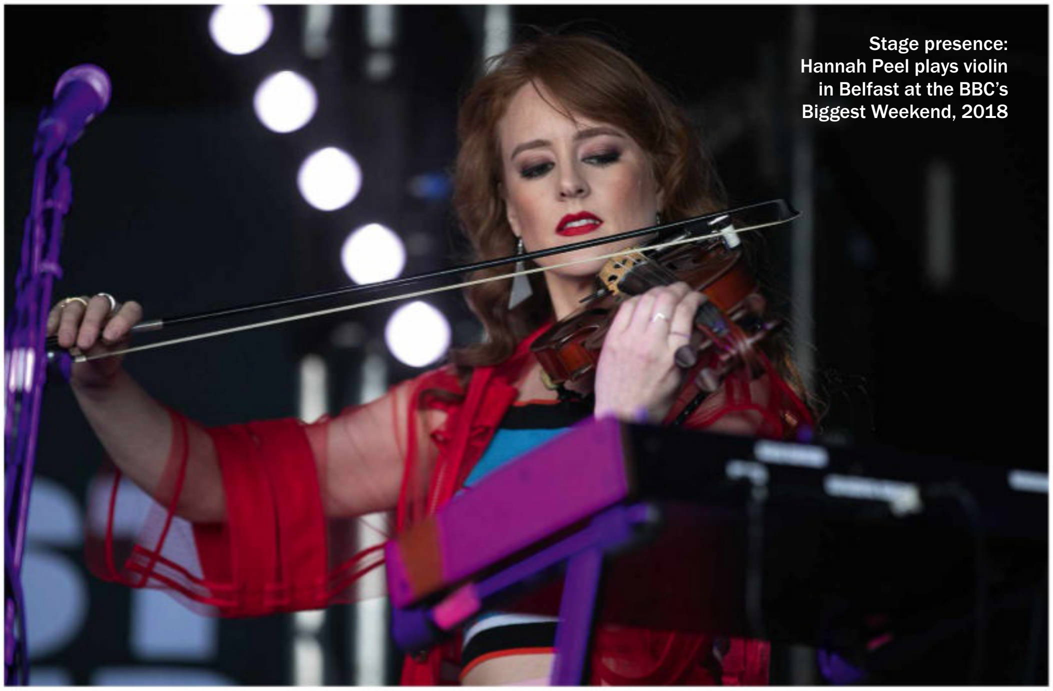
Late at night, who hasn't found themselves struggling to put aside the stresses of the day? Forget about whale song, falling rain and white noise – sometimes what your tired mind needs is an adventure. That is what Hannah Peel offers as a presenter of BBC Radio 3's *Night Tracks*, broadcast for an hour-and-a-half each night at 11pm. In the first 15 minutes of a recent episode, she led her listeners from a new piece by German composer Sophia Jani, via a sparkling performance on a *benju* – a kind of zither from Balochistan – to a chant by a ninth-century Byzantine nun. 'Music to carry you into the darker hours, across the globe and beyond,' she says in a smiling voice as she introduces the show, a cheerful guide with a Yorkshire accent conveying you from this world to the next.

Just like her *Night Tracks* playlist, Peel is many things and seems to move effortlessly between them. Her soundtrack for *Game of Thrones: The Last Watch* was nominated for an Emmy in 2019; she's recently written the music for a play at London's National Theatre; and she sits on the board of the Ivors Academy.

It's February when we meet at London's Kings Place, where Peel is currently an artist-in-residence. She was on stage at the venue the previous evening to give the first live performance of her Mercury Prize-nominated album *Fir Wave*, emerging in bright green disco pants from clouds of dry ice alongside fellow synth player Hazel Mills. Peel wrote the music in lockdown, free to pile up as many wavy lines and pulsing beats as she liked. 'You'd need about ten of us on stage to cover it all live,' she laughs. 'I had to strip everything back, like layers of an onion, to create something we could actually play, starting with the simplest drum beat and building it up like a big mosaic.'

Independent success: Peel at The Mercury Music Awards, 2021

PÅL HANSEN/GETTY, GETTY


Stage presence: Hannah Peel plays violin in Belfast at the BBC's Biggest Weekend, 2018

Peel, 37, was born in Northern Ireland but moved to Barnsley aged eight. A peripatetic music teacher got her started on the cornet, and from there she took up the trombone, spending weekends at brass band competitions, adding in violin and piano along the way. 'I'd never have taken up music if it hadn't been for the free brass lessons at school,' she says.

It was when she encountered a 'Hammond organ-obsessed' piano teacher at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts that things began to take an electronic turn. 'I'd arrive for my piano lesson and end up playing the organ, using my feet and everything, and I went from there to trying out a synth,' she says. The organ's pedals, stops and multiple keyboards helped her to develop the coordination required to control complex on-stage set-ups, like the synths, violin and piano she used for the Kings Place gig.

> 'When I started out, people didn't think self-releasing was cool – it wasn't a good feeling'

In 2011, Peel got chatting to a neighbour who, it transpired, was John Foxx, the original frontman of British new wave band Ultravox. She joined his band, learning how to recreate the analogue sounds and textures of the 1970s and '80s and carrying them with her into her own work. 'There's a whole universe of computerised sounds you can work with, but I always go back to analogue when I'm composing,' she says. 'They've each got their own personality, like a Juno-60 from the early '80s that needs fixing – as soon as you turn it on there's a chord that just appears, like it's singing to itself. It's something you'd never get on a laptop and I love the tangibility of it, of not having a preset.'

From her first album, *The Broken Wave* in 2011, Peel has released pretty much all her music herself. 'There aren't many labels that deal with crossover music, and those that do tend to work only with artists who are very well known,' she explains; 'I had some managers who wanted me to be the next James Blake or someone like that, but it was never going to work. I lose interest too easily if I'm just doing one thing.'

Artistic freedom is all well and good, but what about its real-world implications? 'Nobody wanted my music when I started out and people didn't think self-releasing was cool either. It seemed like no one else was doing it, which wasn't a good feeling.'

How times change. *Fir Wave* was nominated for a Mercury Prize in 2021, Peel's lack of big-label backing not appearing to hinder her ascent. 'My record was so small compared to some of the others that were nominated, but it was obvious that Covid meant lots of us were just making music in our bedroom. It's changed back now, though: last year's shortlist was much less independent.' Still, she was nominated for a prize that in recent years has gone to the likes of Little Simz, Skepta and PJ Harvey. Doesn't it show that musicians outside the corporate machine can still break through? Peel cautiously agrees: 'People told me it gave them hope. I've been

Bangor beat: Conor Mitchell

Rawness and drama

Music in Northern Ireland

'In England, everything you hear about Northern Ireland is about politics, which gives you no sense of how big the contemporary music scene is,' Hannah Peel says of the nation she moved back to in 2018. It should take inspiration from Iceland, she suggests, which has developed global renown as an exporter of cutting-edge soundscapes. Peel readily names several fellow composers: 'Brian Irvine, Ed and Xenia Bennett, Conor Mitchell – there are so many of us just in Bangor, the seaside town where I live. But of course, we all have to travel to Britain to work.'

Last year, public investment in the arts came to just £5.44 per capita in Northern Ireland, compared with around £7.50 in England and down by almost half over the past decade. In the Republic of Ireland, the figure for the same period is almost £26 per capita.

'All the really fiery punk rock and indie stuff that you don't get in London but you do find in Northern Ireland, the rawness and the drama, it's a release of energy and emotion because there's really not much else you can do,' Peel says. 'There's a real lack of venues and very little help to get your music out there.'

PÅL HANSEN/GETTY

Powerful speaker: Peel fights for musicians' rights; (below) her acclaimed *Fir Wave*

there myself, putting out music but not getting anywhere because I didn't have enough money or attention from the press.'

At the helm of *Night Tracks*, Peel wants to give these artists opportunities to get their music heard. 'Listening to the show is a brilliant way to discover music you would never have come across otherwise,' she explains. 'I get really interested when I hear people experiment with their instruments and tell a story with them that goes beyond just playing the notes.'

Just as important is finding the right producer, she says: 'It's a big collaborative process and I have an amazing team. The producer has to be someone who understands a massive range of music, from all over the world and from all periods of history.' More than anything, she goes on, they need to be able to imagine a show that takes the listener on a journey.

It is clear that Peel is just as interested in the practical considerations of making music as she is in the music itself. In 2021, she was elected to the board of the Ivors Academy, Europe's biggest lobbying organisation for professional musicians. She found the responsibility daunting but quickly realised she had plenty to say, much of it about the challenges and opportunities presented by technology. 'Things are moving so fast that it's difficult for the industry to keep up. When streaming came in it was too slow to react and too egotistical to realise that something could come along that would disrupt the way things had always worked before.' The streaming puzzle is yet to be solved and now there's AI to worry about, too. 'We're way behind,' she says, shaking her head.

All AI-generated art draws on the huge body of work created before it by musicians, painters, writers and other human beings who are rarely given any credit, let alone a cut of the profits. 'We've got to do something about it,' she says. 'It's the same on TikTok, which pays its content creators without acknowledging the people whose music they use.'

Peel doesn't use AI in her own work but compares suggestions that its use should be restricted to calls in the mid-20th century for synthesisers to be banned. 'They thought that synths would leave string players out of work but in both cases you still need the human touch. Our brains and bodies are layers of constellations. AI is just a tool.' Challenges to the status quo are nothing new for artists, she says. 'I just want to make sure we're protected.'

Hannah Peel's upcoming Kings Place shows include a collaboration with percussionist Beibei Wang on 16 June, and a specially curated Night Tracks event on 28 October featuring John Foxx, Maya Youssef, Hatis Noit and the Ruisi Quartet

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MUSICAL DESTINATIONS

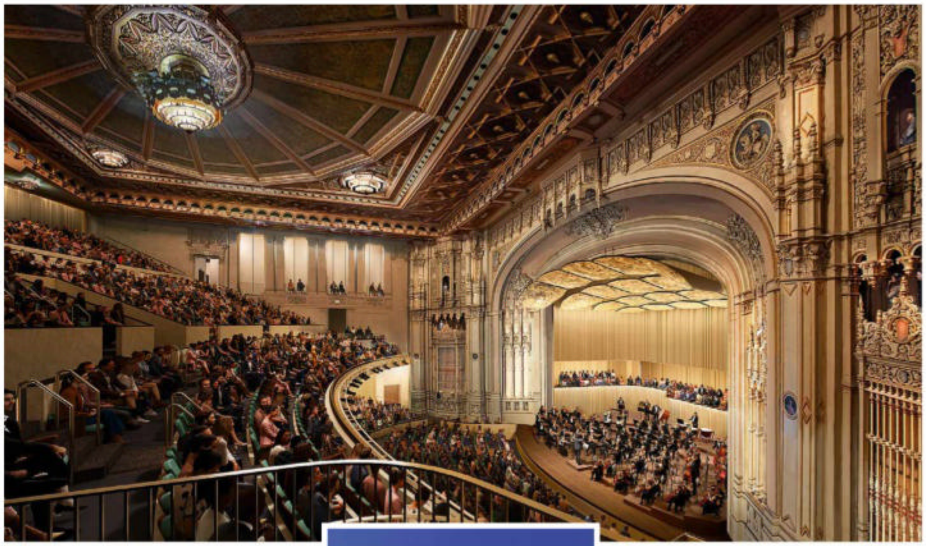
San Diego United States

Jeremy Pound enjoys the great outdoors as the sun sets to Debussy and Mahler at the southern Californian city's eye-catching new venue

Al fresco symphony: the Rady Shell at Jacobs Park; (below) Rafael Payare conducts at the venue's opening night

How best to describe the Rady Shell at Jacobs Park? We'll begin with those names. The 'Rady' – rhymes with 'lady' – and 'Jacobs' refer to local philanthropists who led the way in enabling construction of the $85m venue to be 99 per cent privately funded. The Park, meanwhile, is on a peninsular that sticks out into San Diego Bay and is dominated by the Shell, an enormous canopy covering a stage from which musicians perform to audiences of 2,000 or more – some sitting around tables, some in more formal rows of seats, some spread out on the artificial lawn itself, all in the glorious open air. As a Brit enjoying the warmth of an April evening, I reflect ruefully on how nice it must be to have the sort of climate that allows this to happen.

Opened in August 2021, the Rady Shell is the new pride and joy of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra. Significant investment has gone into equipping it with a state-of-the-art sound system that provides rich, faithful amplification no matter where you sit. What's more, music director Rafael Payare tells me, his players are well catered for too. 'On stage, we have a Meyer Sound system which gives the feeling of playing in an indoor venue,' he says. 'We can hear each other properly and achieve all the important layers, colours



Bright visions: how the refurbished Copley Hall will look; (left) the Museum of Us in Balboa Park

and dynamics – sometimes you forget you are working outdoors! There's something very magical about being able to play, say, Mahler, Debussy or Shostakovich like this in such a beautiful surrounding.'

Debussy and Mahler are, in fact, on the programme during my visit – the former's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and Fantaisie for piano and orchestra, with Jean-Yves Thibaudet as soloist, followed by the latter's Fourth Symphony, adorned by the soprano voice of Hera Hyesang Park. The crystal clarity with which Thibaudet's intricate fingerwork and Park's nuanced delivery are projected justifies every dollar spent on that sound system, even if every now and then a passing boat or plane also lend their voices to the occasion – all part of al fresco concert-going. And if you don't have a ticket to a concert – which for some at those tables comes accompanied by dinner made by feted chef Richard Blais – you can get a taste of the Rady Shell experience simply by walking around the perimeter of Jacobs Park, listening in and looking at the big screens. No-one is going to tell you to take a hike.

This whole notion of putting music right at the heart of the city's daily life is central to the thinking of San Diego SO CEO Martha Gilmer, who the next day gives me a guided tour of Copley Symphony Hall, the orchestra's downtown home in the (comparatively) colder months. If Rady Shell is an unmissable presence on the seafront, you could walk past Copley Hall without even twigging it was there. Built as a movie theatre in 1929, it was taken over by the San Diego Symphony Orchestra in 1984, and five years after that had Symphony Towers, the second tallest skyscraper in the city, built around it. From the outside, it looks like a swish office block.

At present, the ornate auditorium is a hard-hat zone. A major renovation due for completion in September will see, among other things, sightlines and acoustics amended, a choral terrace installed behind the stage, improvements to the backstage facilities and the 2,000-plus capacity reduced to a more sensible 1,700. As Gilmer enthuses, anticipation is already sky high for when Payare lifts his baton for the re-opening performance of Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony on 11 November.

'There's something magical about being able to play in such a beautiful setting'

As safe as it is sunnily self-confident, San Diego is also packed with things to do. A 45-minute stroll takes me up to Balboa Park, a huge green space that is home to a wealth of museums including the San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego Museum of Us and the small but immaculately designed Mingei International Museum, whose own recent refurb included the incorporation of a chamber music recital space in its basement. While in Balboa Park, you may also want to hear a recital at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion and, of course, visit the famous San Diego Zoo – do check out the koalas and red pandas.

Back at the seafront, the USS Midway Museum, situated on board the so-named aircraft carrier, pays homage to San Diego's naval history, while sports fans head to Petco Park, home of the San Diego Padres baseball team. In fact, the Padres have a game at the same time as our concert. Given the proximity of the stadium, I half-expect to hear excited cheers mingling with the lustful longings of Debussy's faun. Nothing, however. Perhaps the team is having a bad day? Here, at least, the orchestra and audience certainly aren't.

Further info: sandiegosymphony.org

Fatal shot: Brenda Ann Spencer is arrested

Infamous incident

'I don't like Mondays'

In 1979, one of San Diego's darkest moments left its mark on musical history. On the morning of 29 January, 16-year-old Brenda Ann Spencer opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle on those waiting to get into Grover Cleveland Elementary opposite her house, killing the school principal and a custodian. When asked why, she replied 'I don't like Mondays. This livens up the day.' The grim incident caught the attention of Bob Geldof, lead singer of The Boomtown Rats, whose song 'I don't like Mondays' went to No. 1 in the UK singles chart for four weeks that summer.

GARY PAYNE, COURTESY SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY AND HGA, GETTY, PETER PORCINE

Gustav Mahler

Forthright and bold as Mahler's symphonies may appear, they are also works of remarkable subtlety and ambiguity, says ***Stephen Johnson***

ILLUSTRATION: MATT HERRING

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31 July – 4 August **Anniversary Special: Composers in Conversation**

Sometimes the music really is like the man – the one the composer Ethel Smyth compared to 'a bomb cased in razor-edges'. Listening to Mahler's music, and especially to those huge, outrageously ambitious symphonies, can be like being at the centre of a controlled explosion. But Smyth is describing Mahler's 'work face' – the face he adopted for coercing, seducing, even terrifying singers and orchestral musicians in pursuit of his vision. There was also Mahler the doting father, Mahler the meditative, exultant Alpine walker and cyclist, the Mahler whose exquisite song from *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen', reveals him 'lost... in my heaven, in my love, in my song', who famously described his symphonies as 'like the world', a musical world that 'must embrace everything'.

As we listen to those symphonies, even when the music is pinning us to the backs of our chairs, we can sense that world-embrace in the kaleidoscopic symbolic 'sampling' of real-world sounds Mahler crams into those immense, teeming scores: rural, urban high- and low-society song and dance, playground chants, military fanfares and funeral marches, birdsong... Yet there's also a sense that the 'world' being embraced is something richer and stranger than what we like to call the 'real' world – the world that is ourselves, our own souls. Like his literary hero Dostoevsky, whom Mahler once called 'my best friend', he presents us with the fullness of being, in all its richness, joys and horrors, extremes of dark and light – and also, most importantly of all, in its internal contradictions.

For there are times when Mahler's music is like a mind in dialogue, arguing passionately with itself: is there 'resurrection' (Symphony No. 2), and in what sense? Or does death make nonsense of everything? Is the expression of tragic emotion uplifting and purgative (No. 6), or does that quasi-classical unity of vision fall apart the moment we face this bewildering world honestly (No. 7)? Does the notion of 'eternity' inspire joy (No. 8) or resignation (*Das Lied von der Erde*)? The dialogue goes on between the works, as well as within them, so that each symphony can appear to call into question the conclusion of the one before, as though Mahler were saying (in a wonderful sentence of Beethoven's) 'Sometimes the opposite is also true'. As conductor John Andrews has pointed out, even Mahler's expression markings can be like 'overhearing his own internal dialogue': 'With mysterious, melancholic expression. Without sentimentality', he writes over the last of the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. Missing from that, we sense, is a heavily stressed 'but'.

Time after time, Mahler throws down a gauntlet – go on, he seems to say, make sense of that! However stirred we may be by, say, a Bach fugue, in essence the music explains itself; there is no need to 'interpret' it. But Mahler will go on throwing semiotic spanners into his own musical works. In Symphony No. 1, what is 'Frère Jacques' doing in a lugubrious,

The world Mahler embraces is richer and stranger than what we call the real world

Mahler's style

Themes and Developments For Mahler, a symphony's theme is its hero, whose developments are life experiences. An upward-straining three-note motif in the Fifth Symphony sounds a cry of anguish, leads an impassioned but doomed quest for transfiguration, then, cunningly masked, launches the crazed waltzing of the *Scherzo*, only to return at the very end in apparent triumph.

Signs and Symbols Funeral marches are clearly death, hymns are faith. Military fanfares, dance tunes, folksongs and church bells are humanity *en masse*; birdsong, animal cries and cowbells (above) are nature in varying stages of articulateness.

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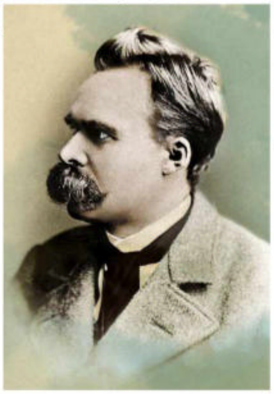
Irony and Sarcasm The Sixth's first movement ends in noisy triumph, but with the grim *Scherzo* and catastrophic *Finale* still to come, we know it can't really be what it claims to be. In the Ninth's 'Rondo-Burleske' a sweet, childlike trumpet tune seems to signal hope, but the crescendo that grows from it collapses hopelessly, and is mocked blisteringly by the clarinets.

Statements and Hints Sung texts in Mahler's symphonies usually mean more or less what we take them to mean. But wordless references to Mahler's songs can be more teasing. It's as though Mahler half wants to explain himself and half knows he can't: 'What do *you* make of all this?'



somehow not entirely serious funeral march; and why is it interrupted by raucous Klezmer music? What has any of this to do with the high-spirited Austrian country dance music in the previous movement? (Though that Trio was a little bit sardonic, wasn't it?) More to the point, what is all this doing in a symphony, traditionally the most high-minded of all orchestral forms? Yet all these elements are united by the same basic musical motifs, presented at the opening of the first movement. So this is a 'symphony' in the original sense of the word: 'sounding together'. Then what does it all mean?

Clearly, for Mahler it did mean something. But how much could he trust his listeners to grasp that meaning for themselves? The First Symphony came into the world furnished with a title and an elaborate programme note. Only half-privately, he connected the symphony to a doomed love affair. But had he said too much? 'I would like it stressed,' he wrote later, 'that the symphony is greater than the love affair it is based on. The real affair became the reason for, but by no means the true meaning of, the work.' When people took him literally, the effects could be appalling. His wife Alma recalled a moment when, after a performance of the choral 'Resurrection' Symphony (No. 2) in St Petersburg, an old lady came to him pleading for enlightenment as to what she could expect when she entered the next world. Apparently she wasn't impressed by Mahler's answer. No wonder that, at a post-concert dinner party a few years later, Mahler drained his wineglass and shouted, 'Perish all programmes!'.

Of course, it helps that several of the symphonies have strategically placed sung texts. The Second Symphony doesn't just end with a choral hymn to resurrection; there's also a solo song, 'Urlicht' ('Primal Light'), to a text from the German collection of folk lyrics *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. After the huge Funeral March first movement, and the borderline psychotic nightmare of the Scherzo, this simple, rapt expression of faith in, well, *something*, is a wonderful change. It lifts the whole narrative to another plane: literally so, tonally speaking, as grim C minor becomes ethereal D flat major. And the voice isn't a soprano but a deeper, more maternal contralto which, given what we know about Mahler's Freud-diagnosed mother fixation… (You can see how these things escalate.)

What matters in Mahler is the ability to listen to one's own inner contradictions

Sometimes Mahler needs us to do a bit of homework if we want to get from the purely musical to the philosophical substance. The Third Symphony's fourth movement is another song, this time setting verses by one of Mahler's philosophical heroes, Friedrich Nietzsche. 'The world is deep', and full of dizzying extremes, sings another contralto voice; embrace them all! Yet Nietzsche, author of *The Anti-Christ*, famously scorned compassion, an emotion unworthy of the self-overcoming 'Superman'; and now in the fifth movement comes another of those sweetly naive *Wunderhorn* folk lyrics that would have brought Nietzsche out in hives: timid St Peter betrays Christ, but Christ not only forgives him, but makes him the 'rock' on which he will build his church. Once again, Mahler invites us to stand back from what he's just apparently said and consider if the opposite might not also be true. If we read those two worldviews expressed as verbal propositions, we might simply scratch our heads at the seeming contradiction; but when we hear them voiced in music, music of such heartbreakingly persuasive power… Well, perhaps Mendelssohn was right, and music is a language 'too precise for words'.

Beyond sung texts, programmes, titles, references to songs explicit or more veiled, there's the issue of how the music itself argues. Beethoven had shown how something as abstract-seeming as symphonic theme and development can become as vital and thought-provoking as the development of a character, or even an idea, in a novel – something that can be *felt* by listeners even if they lack the terminology to explain it. Liszt and Wagner took it further, but it was for

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Philosophical heroes: (from far left) Mahler's literary hero Dostoevsky, as depicted by Vasily Perov; Friedrich Nietzsche, whose verses Mahler set; the composer, with younger daughter Anna

Mahler to show how purely orchestral music can rival even a novel like Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* in its ability to challenge us emotionally and intellectually. Mahler's Eighth Symphony hymns Goethe's idea that within the creative (male) mind dwells a female creative force which, as the choruses insist magnificently at the close, can lead us to the eternal, 'Ewig! Ewig!' The same word closes the next symphonic work, the song-symphony *Das Lied von der Erde*, only now it's a falling, longing, unfulfilled sigh. Then, as the mortality-saturated finale of the Ninth Symphony strives vainly for a moment of Brucknerian transfiguration, horns call out the 'Ewig! Ewig!' motif from the Eighth; only now, joyous assertion has become desperation: the meaning of that motif has changed significantly. The Ninth Symphony's transformations of the 'Farewell' theme from Beethoven's Piano Sonata 'Les Adieux' tell a similar 'story' – more nuanced, interpretatively less specific perhaps, but all the more powerfully suggestive for that.

Mahler may have tied himself in knots about how specific his message could or should be; some of his commentators may have taken his suggestions too enthusiastically and run down ever-narrowing semantic paths. What matters above all is that spirit of internal argument, the ability to listen to one's own inner contradictions and not reach anxiously for one answer, however consoling, but to live the opposition – as Dostoevsky did so enthrallingly in the arguments between the Karamazov brothers Alyosha (the Christian) and Ivan (the atheist-nihilist).

This ability to be in dialogue with oneself – as philosopher Hannah Arendt argued in *The Life of the Mind* – is the sign of a mind that is truly alive. It is a mind that is capable of living in this bewildering world without looking for the kind of systematic solutions which, in order to convince, necessitate our ruling out something – and perhaps also someone. Mahler the Central-European Jew would have been only too aware of the implications of that. We need him, because he expressed that sane truth so honestly and unwaveringly and, perhaps even more so, because he did it in music of such soul-scouring beauty.

MAHLER Life & Times

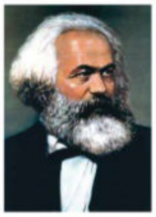
1860

LIFE: Gustav Mahler is born on 7 May in ***Kalischt*** (now Kaliště, in the Czech Republic). His father, an innkeeper, supports Gustav's musical activities.

TIMES: With a force of 1,000 redshirt volunteers, the Italian general Giuseppe Garibaldi captures Sicily before heading into southern Italy where he takes the city of Naples.

1883

LIFE: After studies in Vienna and three short-term conducting posts, he is appointed choral director in the Royal Theatre in Kassel, where he has a love affair with soprano Johanna Richter.



TIMES: The philosopher and political theorist ***Karl Marx*** dies in London aged 74. Friedrich Engels, co-author with Marx of *The Communist Manifesto*, gives an address at his funeral.

1897

LIFE: The stormy start to his tenure as director of the Vienna Hopofer is a sign of things to come; yet his ten years there will also bring a string of successful productions.

TIMES: Bram Stoker's ***Dracula*** is published in London. The title character is possibly inspired by Vlad III, the 15th-century ruler of Wallachia.

1911

LIFE: He dies aged 51 of endocarditis soon after returning to Vienna from the US. He is buried in Grinzing Cemetery next to his elder daughter Maria.

TIMES: Dutch physicist Heike Kamerlingh Onnes discovers superconductivity, by which resistance vanishes in certain materials, allowing electric current to persist indefinitely.

1889

LIFE: He conducts the world premiere of his First Symphony in Budapest. The performance meets with a mixed reception from the critics and Mahler himself later regards it as a disaster.

TIMES: ***Rudolf***, the only son of Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria, and his mistress, the 17-year-old ***Marie von Vetsera***, die together in a suicide pact at his Mayerling hunting lodge.

1902

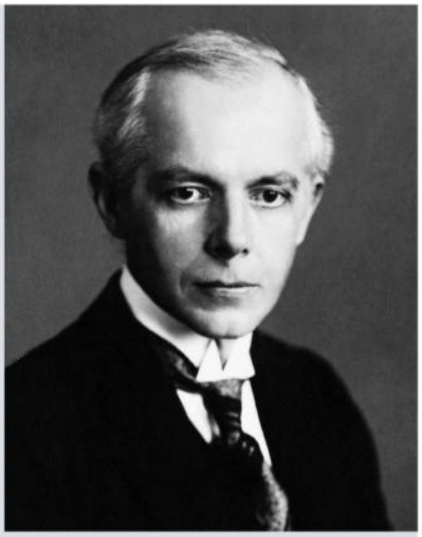
LIFE: He marries ***Alma Schindler***, daughter of painter Emil Schindler. Nearly 20 years his junior, she is a flamboyantly talented composer and author and, until recently, was the lover of composer Alexander Zemlinsky.

TIMES: In a Milan hotel room, tenor ***Enrico Caruso*** makes his first set of recordings for the Gramophone Company. They become best-sellers, establishing his fame across Europe.

Béla Bartók

Concerto for Orchestra

Jessica Duchen **introduces the Hungarian's zestful, life-affirming work written during his final exile in the US, and finds the best recordings**



The composer

Having shown prodigious musical talent from a very early age, Bartók studied piano and composition at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest. In 1903, aged 21, he wrote his first major work, the symphonic poem *Kossuth*. Richard Strauss, Debussy and Stravinsky were all major influences on his work before he found his own voice through detailed research into the folk music of his native Hungary and from further afield. Prior to his emigration to the US, his major works included the opera *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911), the ballet *The Miraculous Mandarin* (1926) and six string quartets.

Building a Library is broadcast on Radio 3 at 9.30am each Saturday as part of *Record Review*. A highlights podcast is available on BBC Sounds.

The work

When Béla Bartók and his wife, the pianist Ditta Pásztory, left Hungary for the US in 1940, it was not a moment too soon. The composer was horrified by the Hungarian government's alignment with Nazi Germany, and his outspoken stance seemed increasingly likely to put his freedom, or his life, under threat. He had read the runes well. In 1944, Hitler's forces overran the country.

In New York, the Bartóks had other things to contend with: irascible landlords, street noise that sometimes confined the sound-sensitive composer to the bathroom for some peace, and, of course, the indignity of having to start again with nothing but a back catalogue. Worse, he was suffering unexplained bouts of fever – the first sign of the leukemia that would later kill him.

Then, however, a *deus ex machina* appeared beside his hospital bed. Serge Koussevitzky, chief conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, had been persuaded by two of Bartók's Hungarian colleagues, the violinist Josef Szigeti and the conductor Fritz Reiner, to approach him for a commission. Bartók needed both the money and the vote of confidence. Retreating in August 1943 to the quiet surroundings of Saranac Lake, he set about writing a substantial, five-movement work and finished it in under two months. Rather than a symphony, he titled it Concerto for Orchestra.

The result was not only a masterpiece, but also has proved enduringly popular. For a composer with a reputation for difficult works, it offers unusual melodic charm; for one with a bent for darkness, it offsets its shadows with sunlit vitality, plus some outright comedy. This is a Hungarian in New York: it's full of the rhythms of his native language but fizzes with relentless Big Apple energy and optimism, belying its composer's fragile state of health.

As word spread of Bartók's presence in the US, more commissions followed; by the time the Concerto was premiered on 1 December 1944, he had almost more work than he could handle. The performance was an immediate success, and Koussevitzky followed it with another a few weeks later, broadcast on the radio, plus a New York premiere in Carnegie Hall.

Bartók's Indian summer also produced his Sonata for Solo Violin (for Yehudi Menuhin), his Piano Concerto No. 3 (for Ditta) and the Viola Concerto, which was unfinished when leukemia caught up with him in September 1945. On his deathbed, he told his doctor that his greatest regret was leaving with a 'full trunk' of unwritten music.

The Concerto for Orchestra does what it says on the tin. It's a five-movement showpiece for a top-notch orchestra, drawing out the instruments' individual natures: whirling flutes, cygnety oboes

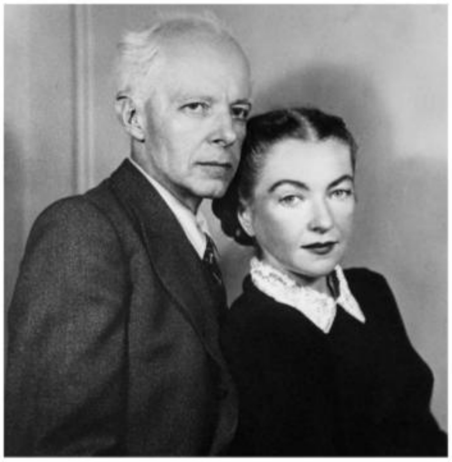
> Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra is full of his native rhythms but with Big Apple optimism

A Hungarian in New York: Bartók at the piano with Joseph Szigeti and Benny Goodman in 1940; (below) with his wife, the pianist Ditta Pásztory, in 1945

and velvety brass, searing strings and, to close, the biggest party in town. Bartók wrote: 'The general mood of the work represents, apart from the jesting second movement, a gradual transition from the sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death-song of the third, to the life-assertion of the last one... The title... is explained by its tendency to treat the single orchestral instruments in a concertant or soloistic manner.'

The introduction rises from a shadowy beginning, gathering pace until the full orchestra springs at last into a vigorous sonata-form *allegro*. The second movement, 'Game [or 'Presentation'] of Couples', offers a procession of woodwind and brass in pairs and, later, larger groups – you need a very good third bassoon for this piece. The 'Elegia' is the work's dark heart, where Bartók seems to release his full anguish; woodwind whirlpools almost recall the Lake of Tears in his opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*.

The 'Intermezzo interotto' is at first a richly melodic inspiration, its big viola



theme based, according to Bartók, on the song 'Hungary, Gracious and Beautiful'. But then the circus comes to town. Bartók's son Peter listened with his father to a broadcast of Shostakovich's brand-new Symphony No. 7 and noticed his irritation at the infuriating march theme, repeated many times over. Here Bartók sends it up, complete with a woodwind giggle and possibly the biggest raspberry ever blown on a concert platform. The intermezzo then gives way to a finale of matchless vitality, the violin lines chasing each other in an exhilarating gallop across the open plains. Bartók revised the ending after the premiere; the first version ends with a downward plunge, the second with an upward rush of joy.

You need, for an ideal performance, both a technically faultless, magnificent ensemble and a conductor who fully identifies with Bartók's idiom, with all its drama, detail, intensity and quirkiness. Various accounts hit my cutting room floor when an interesting interpretation had an orchestra that didn't match up, or when a Rolls-Royce ensemble's conductor sounded frankly too comfortable. There is not one dull second in this piece, and if a recording does not hold you enthralled throughout, it's not doing its job.

Turn the page to discover our recommended recordings of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra

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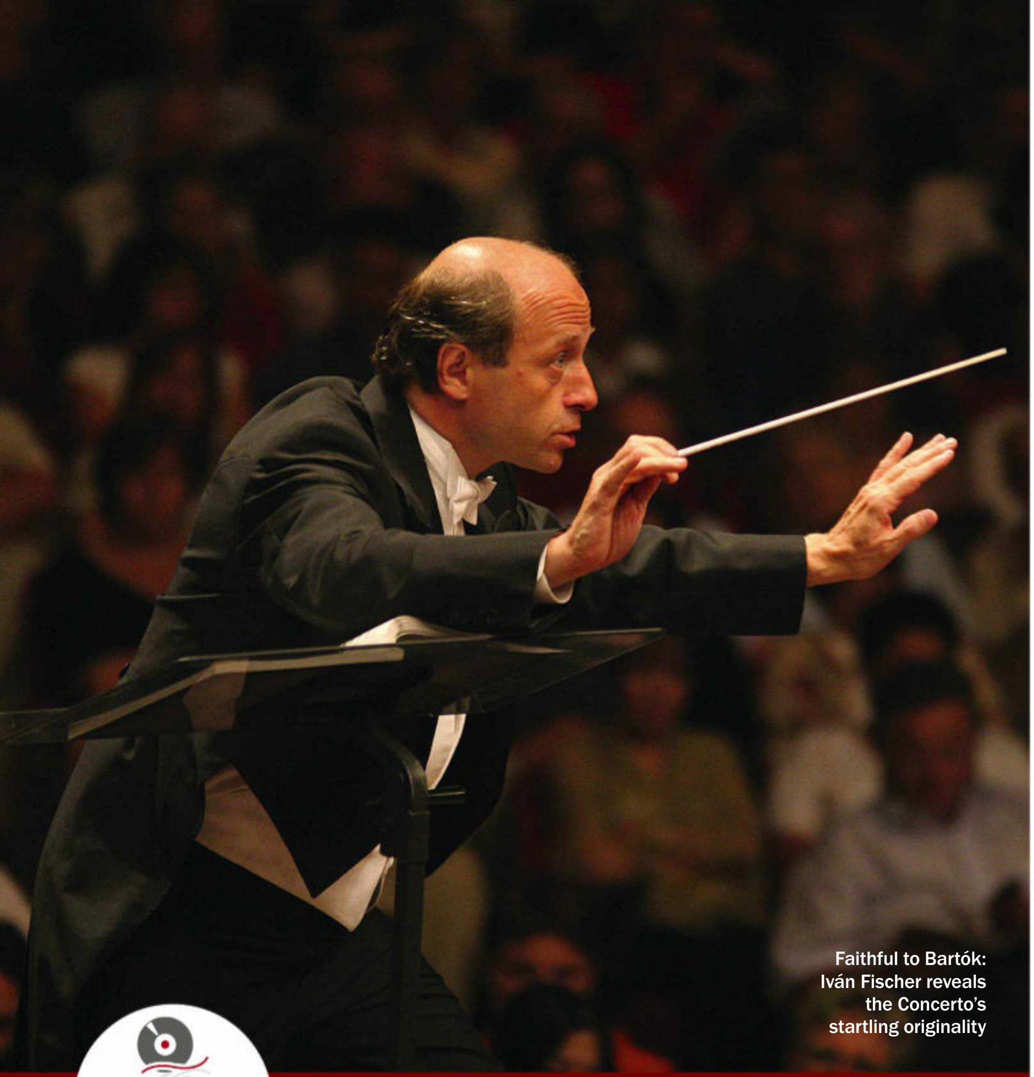

Faithful to Bartók: Iván Fischer reveals the Concerto's startling originality

The best recording

Refreshingly zestful and idiomatic

Iván Fischer *(conductor)*
Budapest Festival Orchestra
Philips 476 7255

The Budapest Festival Orchestra recorded the Concerto for Orchestra under its founder and chief conductor Iván Fischer in 2005, and if any contemporary account has it all, it's this one. First, Fischer observes every detail in both letter and spirit, which is not always the case elsewhere. The opening is rivetingly mysterious, its gathering of forces brilliantly paced, the soft semiquaver entries in the brass offering Hungarian-style impetus on the first note (interestingly, some other Hungarian orchestras avoid this articulation, perhaps deliberately). The *allegro* shines and dances, while the brass playing is so radiant that that alone could almost have secured this version top billing.

The 'Game of Couples' – or 'Presentation of Couples', as conductor Georg Solti once spotted in the manuscript, complete with a faster metronome mark than was common – has a brisk India-rubber bounce, with vivid, characterful articulation that draws out the individual qualities of each instrument. The staccato oboes suit the players to a tee, while the brass chorale is smooth and suavely phrased.

The opening is rivetingly mysterious, its gathering of forces brilliantly paced

The 'Elegia' opens with a chilling sense of tragedy, the oboe keening its lament; this is Bartók in his 'night music' mode, but with many new shadings of emotion. The strings let rip with a dug-in sound that is harsh as well as opulent, capturing the intense, impassioned atmosphere of this howl of darkness.

The 'Intermezzo' begins with a Brahmsy grace, plus gorgeous songfulness in the big tune, before the interruption delivers a level of slapstick that wouldn't be out of place accompanying Laurel and Hardy. But the transition back to the melody's muted iteration throws all the laughter into perspective; Fischer is attentive here to a satisfyingly subtle narrative. The finale is full of drive and glitter, with

Three other great recordings

Georg Solti (conductor)

Georg Solti and the LSO give the BFO a run for their money in a splendidly played recording from 1965 that has rightly become a classic. Solti pulls no punches, but there's subtlety too: for the first movement's oboe-focused second subject, he offers a remarkable new colour, almost like a change of lighting. The second movement balances folksiness with classical poise; the 'Elegia' shivers with windswept nightmares, then evaporates as if awakening. After an excellent Shostakovich ham-up, the finale, even if on the scrambled side, is high on exhilaration. *(Decca 467 6862)*

Serge Koussevitzky (conductor)

The recording of the broadcast second performance, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitzky on 30 December 1944, is from the horse's mouth, and uses the original ending. Koussevitzky's interpretation is all about structural awareness and sense of line. In the relatively brisk 'Elegia', the plunging descents that punctuate the melody conjured, for me, a terrifying image of bombs falling on Budapest, in a way that no other account did. The

finale is non-manic enough to let us hear it properly, and all the more exciting for that. Sound quality is dodgy, but it's fascinating. *(Naxos 8.110105)*

Fritz Reiner (conductor)
Fritz Reiner, who helped persuade Koussevitzky to commission the concerto, had a reputation for ferocity – and if you want scruff-of-the-neck playing, try his 1955 recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Recorded sound is unreliable, but the playing is sweet and bitter, alive in every note, the atmosphere at boiling point. For the 'Intermezzo', more charm would help, but the circus episode offers irresistibly high spirits. The finale is a wild dance, not a mad rush, and the amazing textural effects are the icing on the cake. *(RCA G010003641701P)*

And one to avoid...

In the Berlin Philharmonic's 1965 recording under Herbert von Karajan, the orchestra sounds beautifully plush, as always, but that isn't the point in this piece. The strings are syrupy, the brass soporific and the bassoons lack sparkle. The 'Elegia' is not a searing, bomb-site lament, but virtually moans over being too fat for its silken suit. Indeed, the whole thing feels bizarrely narcissistic and lacking in atmosphere.

vividly marked articulation and the long crescendos perfectly paced.

Through Fischer's balance of rhythm, irony and surprise, all the startling originality of the work comes bowling through. Transitions and gear-changes are elegantly worked, cinematically shifting the moods – you could envisage the murmur of a gathering crowd, trees in the wind by the Danube, or simply the heady, thrilling energy of the Hungarian folk music to which Bartók devoted so much of his life. And the recorded sound quality is clean as a whistle, unlike my other top choices (above), which are historical...

Blistering Bartók: Susanna Mälkki conducts the Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta; (below) Witold Lutosławski

Continue the journey...

We recommend works to explore after Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra

Another work by ***Bartók*** that highlights individual instruments within the context of an ensemble is 1936's Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta. The opening movement may be marked *Andante tranquillo* but still has a distinctly sinister feel to it, as does the similarly slow-paced *Adagio* third. Elsewhere, we get an agitated *Allegro,* complete with dialogue between the timpani and lower strings, and a folky but somehow still fraught *Allegro molto* finale. (**Helsinki PO/Susanna Mälkki** *BIS BIS2378*).

To hear exactly what Bartók was lampooning in the Concerto for Orchestra's 'Intermezzo Interrotto', head for ***Shostakovich***'s 'Leningrad' Symphony No. 7 of 1942. The offending march appears from around seven minutes into the opening movement, heard at first from plucked strings and *pianissimo* snare drum. It is then continuously repeated, Ravel *Boléro*-style, increasing in volume and orchestral heft as it goes. (**Royal Liverpool PO/Vasily Petrenko** *Naxos 8.573057*).

In November 1954, ***Witold Lutosławski*** conducted the world premiere of his Concerto for Orchestra in Warsaw – successfully so, though the composer himself would later show a certain indifference to the work. Scored for a large orchestra, it leans heavily on Polish folk music, incorporating a number of traditional melodies within its four movements, the last of which builds into an enormous, thrilling climax. (**BBC SO/Edward Gardner** *Chandos CHSA 5082*).

Lutosławski's Concerto for Orchestra builds to an enormous, thrilling climax

Thea Musgrave once explained that her Concerto for Orchestra of 1967 came from a dream in which a clarinettist stood up and led the orchestra in a mutiny. The clarinet's wild solo in the fourth of the concerto's five sections is, aptly, the pick of a work that showcases not just the instruments, but the Scottish composer's skill in exploring their capabilities. (**Scottish NO/Alexander Gibson** *Lyrita SRCD253*).

Finally, to hear how Bartók inspired those around him, try the 1947 Concerto for Piano, Strings and Percussion by his fellow Hungarian ***Jenő Takács***, in which the two solo protagonists join forces in a thrilling battle over three movements. (**Aima Maria Labbra-Makk (piano); Savaria SO, Tamás Pál** *Hungaroton HCD32278*).

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Reviews

Recordings and books rated by expert critics

Welcome

I'm sure you'll be poring over the BBC Proms listings, making plans to attend or wishing you could. This month's reviews pages feature a good many artists paying a visit to the Royal Albert Hall this season, so why not whet your appetite and dive into some of their recordings? Orchestra-wise we have both the London and Liverpool Philharmonics, plus Bremen's Kammerphilharmonie and the Britten Sinfonia. Conductors include Nicholas Collon, Paavo Järvi, Edward Gardner, Domingo Hindoyan and Vladimir Jurowski, while taking centre-stage are pianists Isata Kanneh-Mason and Alexander Melnikov, violinist María Dueñas and baritone Michael Spyres.

All that, plus the usual archives round-up, Brief Notes and books.

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

This month's critics

John Allison, Nicholas Anderson, Terry Blain, Kate Bolton-Porciatti, Geoff Brown, Michael Church, Christopher Cook, Martin Cotton, Christopher Dingle, Misha Donat, Jessica Duchen, Rebecca Franks, George Hall, Malcolm Hayes, Claire Jackson, Daniel Jaffé, Stephen Johnson, John-Pierre Joyce, Nicholas Kenyon, Erik Levi, Andrew McGregor, David Nice, Roger Nichols, Steph Power, Anthony Pryer, Paul Riley, Jan Smaczny, Anne Templer, Sarah Urwin Jones, Kate Wakeling, Barry Witherden

KEY TO STAR RATINGS

★★★★★	Outstanding
★★★★	Excellent
★★★	Good
★★	Disappointing
★	Poor

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Minnesota's Mahler is a fitting milestone

This exceptional recording proves the perfect way for Osmo Vänskä to bow out as music director, says ***Malcolm Hayes***

Mahler

Symphony No. 9
Minnesota Orchestra/
Osmo Vänskä
BIS BIS-2476 (CD/SACD)
81:32 mins

Towards the end of their lives, some of the great composers seemed to develop a sixth sense that allowed them to gaze onto otherworldly vistas of imagination – a kind of 'beyond', exploring new and remote musical territory that only they could perceive. Beethoven's late sonatas and string quartets come to mind, as do Bruckner's Eighth and Ninth Symphonies, and Bach's *A Musical Offering* and *The Art of Fugue*. In the same company are Mahler's 'song symphony' *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth) and his Ninth Symphony – his last completed work before his death in 1911, aged just 50.

Commentators on the symphony have often read much into Mahler's heart condition – a defective valve was diagnosed immediately after the traumatic death of his infant daughter Maria from scarlet fever and diphtheria in 1907. Even so, much of the Ninth proclaims a renewed and burgeoning love of life, alongside a magnificent pride in creative powers that were at their peak. In his perceptive booklet note for this release, Jeremy Barham emphasises that the poignancy also pervading much of the music surely relates to Mahler's unfinished grieving of Maria's death, besides heightened awareness of his own mortality.

Doing justice to a work composed on such a vast emotional scale is a major challenge for any conductor-and-orchestra team. Osmo Vänskä made this recording a few months before the end of his 19-year tenure as the Minnesota Orchestra's music director, and the result is truly

All about the finer points: Osmo Vänskä's reading of the Ninth is precise and beautifully judged

JOEL LARSON, GETTY

exceptional. In the two huge outer movements, Vänskä's approach is different from the kind of hyper-intense psychodrama associated with Leonard Bernstein (and which surely only Bernstein's unique genius could bring off convincingly). The emphasis here is on beautifully judged line and flow, allowing the music's expressive extremes to speak for themselves without any need for exaggeration. Mahler's concept of a scherzo movement as an ironic dance of death was one of his trademarks. Vänskä duly maximises the coarseness of the second movement's harsh parody of an Austrian Ländler; and the *Rondo-Burleske*'s obsession with chasing its own tail hurtles along at full tilt.

The Minnesota Orchestra's response to this interpretation has a particular kind of pliable mastery, precisely shaded rather than garishly coloured, that suits the music to near-perfection. So does the recorded sound, demonstrating how the spacious acoustic of Minneapolis's Orchestra Hall also wonderfully conveys orchestral detail. Among countless memorable moments from a stellar team of principal players, many come from the principal horn, whose way of making things quietly happen in one solo phrase after another mesmerises the ear. When the first movement's closing horn-call for the section's first and second players arrives, the moment is as beautiful as you've by now come to expect, and so is the E flat clarinet's demanding solo that follows – slow, quiet, ultra-exposed and delivered with flawless poise.

The principal horn's way of making things quietly happen mesmerises the ear

Throughout the closing *Adagio* the string section's singing tone, tireless yet never portentous, leads towards the quietest of quiet endings, performed with extraordinary concentration and control. This recording is one of those special listening experiences where the world afterwards is a different place.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Performer's notes
Osmo Vänskä

Tell us about your approach to Mahler...
We want to play well, and we want to lead with all the emotions which are written there. I think my way of working, and how I understand the music, is very much to go for the detail, and I think Mahler is the best example of a composer who has written a lot of details. When this is the goal, I need a producer who is helping to take care that all the details are there, and a recording engineer who is making sure we are able to hear them. For me, Rob Suff [BIS's artistic director] is the best producer in the world, and the orchestra has 100 per cent trust in him. I think that this whole project has been some sort of adventure, and I have learned many things about Mahler and the orchestra have learned many things about how to play Mahler.

What do you love most about the Ninth Symphony?
It's one story, starting from the beginning of the first movement and it continues through to those eternally long notes at the end. With this we're coming to the end of a life, or a picture of the end of a life.

What do you feel as you look back on your Minnesota tenure?
Nineteen years... It has been a very good time in my life, for my life and for my job. I learned a lot and I believe that the orchestra moved in a better direction all the time. This is not only my feeling, it's something other people have said. So it's good to leave the orchestra when it's going well. They took a picture of all the new players I hired and I think the number was 42! So it's a big part of the orchestra who started work during my time.

Orchestral

ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

A voiceless *Tristan* which still manages to sing loudly

Michael Church is impressed by this Weimar take on Henk de Vlieger's very ambitious Wagner reduction

Orchestral storytelling: conductor Hansjörg Albrecht conjures magic and passionate playing

Wagner

Tristan und Isolde – An Orchestral Passion (arr. Henk de Vlieger)
Staatskapelle Weimar/Hansjörg Albrecht
Oehms Classics OC 1729 58:02 mins

Wagner reductions for orchestra are now almost commonplace. A few months ago in these columns, I praised Andrew Gourlay's brilliant 45-minute orchestral 'construction' of his *Parsifal Suite* out of Wagner's 270-minute opera, with creative liberties successfully taken in the ordering of the work's sections. *Tristan und Isolde* is another popular site for reductive plunder, the most extreme example of which was Leopold Stokowski's 28-minute 'symphonic synthesis' in the 1930s of the Prelude, the love duet and the finale. In 1994 the Dutch composer and arranger Henk de Vlieger embarked on a much more ambitious project – a through-composed hour without a break and without voices, which nevertheless sought to convey the whole story.

The release is headed with the words 'symphonic compilation', but the subtitle by Vlieger to his arrangement is 'an orchestral passion', and that is how this work comes over, as performed by the Staatskapelle Weimar under Hansjörg Albrecht's baton. Albrecht's players establish a magical silkiness in the Prelude, delicately reflect Isolde's arousal after the horn call in Act II and create a hallucinatory momentum for the lovers' mounting excitement until they are struck dumb by the arrival of King Mark.

> This fine performance should come with a health warning

Wagner told Mathilde Wesendonck, who at least partly inspired this landmark opera, that mediocre performances were safer with this work, because a really good performance 'would drive people mad'. By that token, this fine performance – in which solo instruments brilliantly stand in for human voices – should come with a health warning.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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VANESSA DALY, MATHIAS BOTHOR

Bartók

Concerto for Orchestra; Four Orchestral Pieces
Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra/Karina Canellakis
Pentatone PTC 5187 027 63:15 mins

This enticing and brilliantly engineered release, celebrating the debut recording partnership between the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and their chief conductor Karina Canellakis, opens in a particularly auspicious manner with a superbly committed account of Bartók's unaccountably neglected *Four Orchestral Pieces*. Originally composed in 1912 and orchestrated nine years later, this stunning work inhabits the same darkly coloured soundworld as the opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and the ballet *The Wooden Prince*, although the second movement *Scherzo*'s aggressive writing foreshadows the slightly later ballet, *The Miraculous Mandarin*. Canellakis projects the slow 'Preludio', 'Intermezzo' and 'Marcia Funebre' movements with full-blooded passion, securing a wonderfully warm string tone from her orchestra, and unleashes tremendous energy and ferocity in the *Scherzo*.

Canellakis faces stern competition in the Concerto for Orchestra with classic benchmark accounts from the likes of Reiner, Solti, Iván Fischer and, recently, Susanna Mälkki (see p64). The great virtue of this performance, however, is that Canellakis places more emphasis on the work's shadowy and anguished resonances rather than focusing on its propensity towards extrovert virtuoso display. This aspect particularly comes to the fore in the carefully calibrated and atmospheric slow introduction to the first movement which manages to combine mystery and uneasy anticipation, and in the central 'Elegia', invested here with a profoundly affecting sense of impending tragedy. The Netherlands Radio Philharmonic delivers stunningly incisive playing in the *moto perpetuo* passagework of the *Finale*, and the wonderfully clear recording allows you to hear every subtle detail in Bartók's fabulously imaginative orchestration. My only

caveat with this performance is the somewhat rushed account of the 'Game of Couples' second movement which robs the music of some of its whimsy and bitingly satirical humour. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Farrenc

Symphonies Nos 1-3; Overtures Nos 1 & 2

Insula Orchestra/Laurence Equilbey

Erato 5419752210 113:29 mins (2 discs)

Laurence Equilbey and her Insula Orchestra, based at La Seine Musicale in Paris, have been at the forefront of the revival of interest in Louise Farrenc, a musician whose achievements were remarkable on many fronts.

Born in 1804 and active as a pianist, teacher, composer of fiendish etudes for her instrument and a plethora of chamber music, she also wrote three excellent and startlingly Germanic symphonies in mid-19th century Paris; such works were anything but trendy there at the time. She spent her later years researching early music and I suspect she would have approved of Equilbey and Insula's devotion to performing her music on historically appropriate instruments.

The first of these two discs is the ensemble's previously released account of the Symphonies Nos 1 and 3; the second, of No. 2 and the overtures, is new. The Overture No. 2, incidentally, bears a startling resemblance to Mozart's for *Don Giovanni*, with its sombre fanfares, extreme dynamic contrasts and heart-beat rhythm segueing into a headlong *allegro*.

As a complete experience the assembled works prove both illuminating and rewarding. While tremendously fresh and vigorous, the Symphony No. 2's performance feels somewhat mellower, arguably less overstated in expression than its forerunner disc. There are moments when the woodwind are slightly engulfed by the strings and the resonant acoustic. In general, however, the gut-and-wood soundworld of Insula is sympathetically at one with Farrenc's spirited aesthetic. *Jessica Duchen*

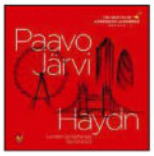
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Haydn

London Symphonies, Vol. 1: No. 101 'The Clock'; No. 103 'Drum Roll'

Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen/Paavo Järvi

RCA Red Seal 19658807412 54:32 mins



To listen to Haydn's late symphonies is to marvel anew at their inventiveness, and their seemingly endless supply of surprises in terms of sudden changes in direction and unexpected contrasts of instrumentation. Paavo Järvi is good at bringing out the music's humour: the delicate violin solo in the slow movement of the 'Drum Roll' Symphony No. 103 (it would have been played by Johann Peter Salomon, the instigator of Haydn's London visits in the 1790s), followed immediately by deafening trumpet and drum fanfares; or the long passage in the second movement of the 'Clock' Symphony No. 101 where the tick-tock motion is transferred to a flute and bassoon playing more than two octaves apart, while the strings are confined to just the first violins.

Mind you, Järvi's clock runs very fast: for all its wit, this is music that needs much more elegance and gracefulness than his impatient speed allows. He is unduly hasty in the finale of the 'Drum Roll', too, where much of the music's detail and articulation are lost in what becomes scampering passagework.

On the other hand, there's a welcome touch of warmth in Järvi's handling of the minuet movements: the lingering, nostalgic account of the rustic trio in the 'Clock', or the tinge of romanticism introduced in the second half of the minuet in the 'Drum Roll', where the music takes a gentle plunge into a wholly unexpected key. The Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie of Bremen is on its toes throughout, and the recording does the playing full justice. *Misha Donat*

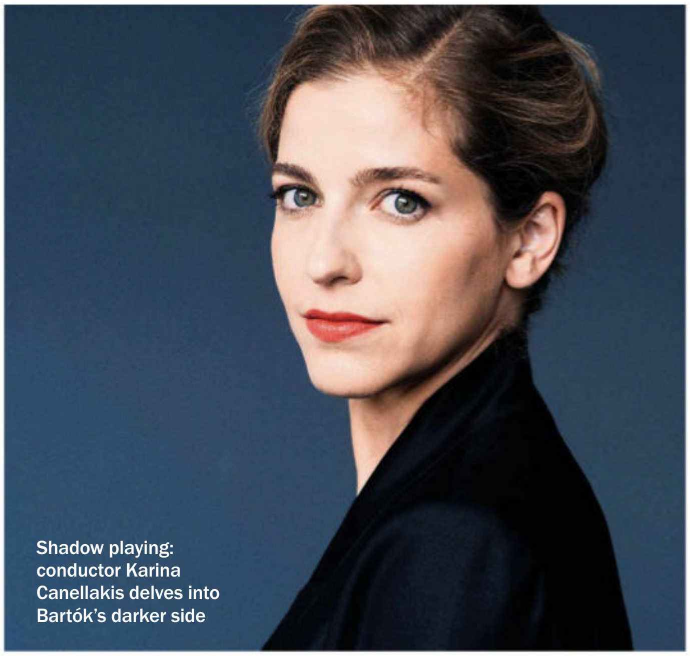
PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Mozart

Symphonies: No. 39 in E flat; No. 40 in G minor; No. 41 in C, 'Jupiter'

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/Herbert Blomstedt

BR Klassik 900196 102:31 mins (2 discs)



Shadow playing: conductor Karina Canellakis delves into Bartók's darker side

Herbert Blomstedt, now in his mid-90s, must be the oldest conductor still at work with some of the world's major orchestras, but there's nothing old-fashioned about these warm and heartfelt performances of Mozart's last three symphonies – indeed, what's immediately striking about them is the degree to which Blomstedt has clearly taken note of historically informed performance practice. He observes every single repeat, even in the da capos of the minuet movements, and avoids the temptation to linger unduly in the slow movements – notably so in Symphony No. 40, where the second movement is almost more like an *Allegretto* than an *Andante*.

Blomstedt gives an altogether glowing account of the slow movement in the remaining two symphonies, and Mozart's unusual use of muted violins in the *Andante* of the 'Jupiter' makes the piece sound even more poignant. The 'Jupiter's opening movement is appropriately resplendent, and Blomstedt makes the most out of the curious chromatic passage which erupts so forcefully at the start of the recapitulation in the famous finale. His inclusion of the long second-half repeat in the latter piece serves to add extra weight to the coda, where the music reaches a climax of contrapuntal complexity, when it eventually comes. The 'live' performances of the last two symphonies have been issued on CD before, but it's good to have the more recent account of No. 39 to complete the triptych. The Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, with whom Blomstedt has had a particularly close association over the years, plays splendidly throughout. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Steve Reich

Music for 18 Musicians

Colin Currie Group; Synergy Vocals

Colin Currie Records CCR 0006 (CD/SACD) 63:54 mins

The collaboration of virtuoso percussionist Colin Currie, a group of his favourite musicians and the vocal group Synergy Vocals has resulted in this album of Steve Reich's piece *Music for 18 Musicians*. The combination of xylophones, marimbas, vibraphone, clarinets and bass clarinets, pianos, violin and cello draws on some compositional devices inspired by the musical worlds of 12th-century organum, Balinese gamelan music and indeed the contemporary soundworld surrounding Reich in the 1970s. Like any composer, Reich didn't live in a social vacuum and there were sonorities from this period hinted at; 'Section V', for

example, has piano riffs reminiscent of Keith Jarrett, while vocals add some jazz inspired ranges, and there are even whiffs of rock bass lines.

Currie's connection with this music is unashamedly deep, bordering on the spiritual, explaining 'when you "plug-in" to this music... there is an astonishing feeling of elevation that approaches levitation...' Likewise, the listener's relationship with this recording is dependent on the ability to enter a place of stillness and meditation. Despite the breadth of dynamics, the long-range harmony and repetitive nature of the grooves offer little in the way of surprise – rather this is music of contemplation and placidity. *Anne Templer*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Roberto Sierra

Symphony No. 6; Sinfonietta; Fandangos; Two Pieces; Alegría
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/Domingo Hindoyan
Onyx ONYX 4232 64:45 mins

In an overview of this vivacious portrait album from conductor Domingo Hindoyan and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, composer Roberto Sierra notes that 'looking back is not something I often do'. It feels true of the works themselves notwithstanding their 25-year span: vibrant and warmly expansive, while not divorced from their musical heritage, each seems to surge perpetually forwards in sheer delight at the possibilities of rhythm and colour, embracing a wealth of musics old and new.

Born in Puerto Rico in 1953, Sierra is recognised worldwide for his distinctive post-Romantic, Iberian-inflected Caribbean-Latin voice. Here *Fandangos* (2000) most explicitly engages with history. Exploring possible lineages of that dance through Europe, Mexico and the Caribbean, a complex tapestry of melody and rhythm is woven via the fandangos of Soler, Boccherini and Domenico Scarlatti.

Yet the past is present elsewhere too, the orchestra rising with aplomb to meet Sierra's joyfully sophisticated sensibility. From the ecstatic outbursts of the brief *Alegría* ('Happiness', 1996) to the wilder corners of the four-movement, city-cum-jungle-inspired Symphony

Seasoned traveller: Adrian Chandler curates an entertaining selection and plays very fine solos

LIA VITTONE PHOTOGRAPHY

No. 6 (2020-21) composer and orchestra alike pivot smartly from salsa to Beethovenian scherzo, danza to pastoral, the dissonances fleetingly suggestive of the modernism of Sierra's sometime teacher Ligeti.

Beneath the infectious surfaces, structures are tightly wrought – further underlining the eclecticism of Sierra's engagement with history: while the Symphony and earlier Sinfonietta for String Orchestra (2020) deploy sonata form as an 'historical framework' within which traditional popular dances come alive, the finely balanced *Two Pieces for Orchestra* (2017) hints at a more intimate age-old tension between agitation and exuberance. *Steph Power*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

An Englishman Abroad

Brescianello: Overture-Suite; Chaconne in A; **Caldara:** La Verità nell'Inganno – Ouverture (ed. Chandler); **Matteis the Younger:** Concerto for Violin, Strings & Continuo in B flat; La Verità nell'Inganno; **Purcell:** Chacony; **Telemann:** Ouverture-Suite in G, TWV 55:G5; **Vivaldi:** Violin Concerto in E minor, RV277 'Il favorito'
La Serenissima/
Adrian Chandler (violin)
Signum Classics SIGCD 751
88:06 mins (2 discs)

The title of this album refers to Nicola Matteis the Younger, the English-born son of an Italian father of the same name who settled in England during the 1670s. Both were violinists and composers. There is an element of conjecture in Adrian Chandler's accompanying historical narrative, yet he has put together an entertaining programme. Matteis the Younger left England towards the end of the 17th century and was shortly after appointed principal violinist of the Vienna Hofkapelle and director of instrumental music. He died in Vienna in 1737.

Matteis is represented by a Violin Concerto and dances from one of the many court ballets. The Concerto is attractive, but it is the ballet music which more readily engages attention and makes us long to hear more. Vivaldi's well-known Violin Concerto in E minor, *Il Favorito*, appears here, Chandler surmising that Matteis might once have played it. Chandler himself is the expressive soloist here. Comparably speculative is the inclusion of a characteristic orchestral suite by Telemann.

Speculative, too, is the inclusion of a suite by Antonio Brescianello who, in Chandler's words, 'might have come across the music of Matteis', though musically the Suite holds its own here. Chaconnes by Purcell and Brescianello frame a programme where the strings of La Serenissima are responsive to nuance and congruent in sound. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Jurowski Conducts Stravinsky, Vol. 2

Stravinsky: The Fairy's Kiss; **Tchaikovsky:** Sleeping Beauty – excerpts (arr. Stravinsky)
London Philharmonic Orchestra/ Vladimir Jurowski
LPO LPO 0126 55:27 mins

Jurowski applies his hallmark fastidiousness in close collaboration with LPO players, giving Stravinsky's Tchaikovsky ballet an even more elegiac, intimate atmosphere than usual. The Hans Christian Andersen story of the boy marked at birth by an icy kiss which will see him carried off by the supernatural donor on the brink of human happiness deserves no less. Jurowski may stint a bit on the danceable qualities of the faster passages, but I've never heard the woodwind solos and groupings register so poignantly. All the more need for orchestral credits (sadly lacking in the booklet); but suffice it to say that should you want to know if this release is for you, try the flute-graced variation of the *Pas de deux* (Track 12), honouring Stravinsky at his most transcendent.

His own kiss is everywhere on the Tchaikovsky piano pieces and songs he adapts, the poignancy most indebted to another fairy-graced world, *The Sleeping Beauty*, the older composer's most comprehensive masterpiece. It wasn't a good idea to start with the 'Bluebird' *Pas de deux*, trimmed orchestration-wise for the New York Ballet Theatre at a time of wartime austerity, and sounding alarmingly thin and even shrill (uncharacteristic of the principal flute) in dry Festival Hall acoustics. But you may like the few more individual touches applied to Aurora's Act II variation and the violin-solo Entr'acte for Diaghilev's attempt at the complete in 1921, when Tchaikovsky's instrumentation for these previously cut numbers was missing. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

CONCERTO CHOICE

Energy and excitement in this bounty of Bacewicz

The Finnish Radio Symphony and soloists take to this music with great aplomb, says ***Rebecca Franks***

Fine equal partners: Jablonski and Brauss impress in the Concerto for Two Pianos

MAARIT KYTÖHARJU

Bacewicz

Piano Concerto; Concerto for Two Pianos*; Overture; Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion

Peter Jablonski, *Elisabeth Brauss (piano); Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra/Nicholas Collon

Ondine ODE 1427-2 62:27 mins

The bustling orchestral Overture whips up excitement for what's to come. Why isn't this natty five-minute number played in far more concerts? Full marks, too, for the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra's energy, with the build-ups of tension expertly handled by conductor Nicholas Collon.

The bulk of this brilliantly played album is given over to two concertos by the Polish composer. The Piano Concerto (1949) might well appeal to those who enjoy Prokofiev and Bartók, though its sweep, energy and internal logic are entirely Bacewicz's own. Peter Jablonski, whose recording of the composer's solo piano works was shortlisted for a BBC Music Magazine Award, is the excellent soloist.

Elisabeth Brauss joins him for the Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra, which dates from the 1960s and shows just how distilled Bacewicz's style had become. Its first movement is bracing and percussive, the central *Larghetto* muted and fragmented, while the finale needs much nimble agility. The two pianos sometimes act as one, at other times are in opposition, and Brauss and Jablonski are fine equal partners here.

> The build-ups of tension are expertly handled by conductor Nicholas Collon

The *Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion* (1953) pays homage to Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*. Like everything here, it's a piece that bursts with vitality and life. The FRSO responds with aplomb, and the Ondine sound engineers have caught the orchestral detail in wonderful clarity.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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Beethoven

Piano Concertos Nos 3 & 4

Elisabeth Leonskaja (piano); Orchestre national du Capitole de Toulouse/Tugan Sokhiev

Warner Classics 5419726309 72:44 mins

One of the last surviving Russian-born pianists in the line of Richter and Gilels, Elisabeth Leonskaja has lately been recording solo and chamber music – so this new concerto album is welcome. While never making an ugly sound, her playing is weighty and forceful.

She voices Beethoven's writing with total clarity and a natural sense of phrasing. Yet the Third Concerto's humour and drama is underplayed: its first movement's architecture is secure, but tempos verge on the deliberate: the central *Largo* feels as if it will never move beyond its opening chord, the flute/bassoon exchanges too strung out at this speed. The last movement is perfectly articulated, but its potential cheekiness doesn't spring to life until the final pages.

In No. 4 there's wisdom in her care in the opening exchanges, and her off-beat *sforzandos* later in that movement are impeccable. Her control is evident in the final notes of the central *Andante con moto*, the dissonant F sharp perfectly resolved onto E, and the finale races away with clear accents and vivid contrasts, well-matched by Tugan Sokhiev and his Toulouse orchestra.

Nicholas Kenyon

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Bruch • Tchaikovsky

Bruch: Scottish Fantasy

Kirill Troussov (violin); Lübeck Philharmonic/Christian Mandeal

Orchid Classics ORC100224 26:23 mins

Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto

Kirill Troussov (violin); Orchestra of Teatro Lirico Giuseppe Verdi di Trieste/Nikša Bareza

Orchid Classics ORC100233 34:46 mins (digital-only EPs)

Does anyone need to hear Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy*? This performance

reminded me that only a movement or two is fit for purpose today, but at least 'The Dusty Miller' gets enlivening treatment, and what's spirited in the finale has due panache. Kirill Troussov is an old-school virtuoso, larding the tone in true soloistic style, and since there isn't much interest in Bruch's orchestra, that's fine. Yet the live recording means that the occasional rhythmic imprecision – some might call it freedom – and a passing dodginess in intonation, generally good, could have done with a patching tweak.

The test of success in the Tchaikovsky Concerto is how eager one is to sit through the straightforward first movement recap: despite the score in front of me, my mind wandered. Troussov does make characterful play with the centre of the movement, though, and his cadenza delivers the goods. But the necessary introspection is only to be found here in the second theme, while the 'Canzonetta' feels too knowing, and the woodwind which usually bring melancholy charm here are merely dutiful. With solid but not inspired orchestral playing under Nikša Bareza, it's a performance you'd be happy to hear in the concert hall, but not worth preserving for posterity. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Bruch • Price

Bruch: Violin Concerto No. 1; **Price:** Violin Concertos Nos 1 & 2; Adoration
Randall Goosby (violin); Philadelphia Orchestra/Yannick Nézet-Séguin
Decca 485 4234 72:26 mins

There's much to admire in Randall Goosby's debut concerto recording. This star pupil of Itzhak Perlman possesses a beautifully warm and tender sound, as well as delivering technically immaculate playing that easily surmounts the most challenging daredevil passagework in the two Florence Price concertos. More importantly, his interpretations are free from the kind of idiosyncratic mannerisms that can disrupt the natural flow of the music.

Such virtues are very much on display in a lovely performance of the Bruch Concerto, the expressive melodies of its central slow movement projected here without recourse to over-indulgence. It helps that the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin are so fabulously responsive in this live performance, bringing immense character and interest to the thickly scored accompaniment and delivering stunningly exciting whirlwind playing in the big orchestral tutti near the end of the first movement.

The commitment to promoting the previously overlooked music of Florence Price, already reflected in the award-winning Philadelphia/Nézet-Séguin recordings of her First and Third Symphonies, pays special dividends here with some sharply focused orchestral playing in the two Violin Concertos that keeps the listener fully engaged, even in the more discursive passages of the lengthy opening movement to the First Concerto. To my mind, however, the compactly designed Second Concerto, with its fascinating kaleidoscope of inventive orchestral textures, is the more successful work. But the haunting melody and slightly bluesy harmony of the slow movement to the First could well become a concert favourite in its own right. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Nielsen

Violin Concerto; Symphony No. 4 'The Inextinguishable'
James Ehnes (violin); Bergen Philharmonic/Edward Gardner
Chandos CHSA 5311 (CD/SACD) 67:51 mins

Nielsen's symphonies follow perhaps the most satisfying evolution of any late-19th-early-20th-century cycle, even if each is perfect in itself. Other orchestral works share the characteristics of their contemporary symphonies, so perhaps it would make most sense to pair the Violin Concerto with the Third rather than the Fourth; the thumbprints and connections are many. What we have here, though, is what Nielsen himself programmed as conductor in what was his only London concert.

It couldn't have a better advocate than James Ehnes: strong in his lyricism when he needs to be, alert to all dynamics and a sense of fantasy which is outstanding in the two cadenzas. The form is still puzzling – the opening 'Praeludium' evolves far more memorably than the short *poco adagio*, and into a much more earwormy tune – but Nielsen does excel in a concerto rondo that's up there with the best, teeming with ideas, and more concise than most.

The Symphony is the unified masterpiece, though. I've heard more sheerly explosive eruptions at the start than the one Edward Gardner conjures, and the first movement doesn't quite have the consistent momentum of the most flowing interpretations. But the Bergen woodwind capture the delicious shyness of the ensuing intermezzos, and from the point that violas and cellos join the iron-clad string declamations of the slow movement, the performance catches consistent fire, with a proper headlong impulse to the glorious finale. The recording is immediate, rich and dynamically full-range. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Concerto debut: Randall Goosby is immaculate in Florence Price

JEREMY MITCHELL

Rachmaninov • Valentin Silvestrov

Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No. 3; Youth Symphony; **Silvestrov:** The Messenger
Anna Fedorova (piano); Sinfonieorchester St Gallen/Modestas Pitrėnas
Channel Classics CCS45023 68:50 mins

Back in 2020, I gave a very warm welcome to this team's first volume of Rachmaninov's Concertos. A great deal has happened since, not least Russia's invasion of Anna Fedorova's home country, which surely explains the otherwise rather eccentric programming of this final instalment. After the concerto, rather than include another of Rachmaninov's piano works, orchestra and soloist apparently go their separate ways: Modestas Pitrėnas conducts the so-called *Youth Symphony*, the 18-year-old Rachmaninov's exuberant but heavily-indebted-to-Tchaikovsky piece composed in his final year at the Moscow Conservatory; then Fedorova plays the very inward and totally unrelated *The Messenger* by Ukraine's most celebrated living composer, Valentin Silvestrov.

Fedorova brings a deal of this inward quality to Rachmaninov's mighty Third – admittedly a work with an understated beginning. But disappointingly, Fedorova generally takes a slow and ruminative approach, dampening the fire that one can hear in so many more compelling performances of this work. Often, where Rachmaninov

requires a resumption of the movement's essential flow or even a quickening, Fedorova pulls back: this happens most grievously at the end of the cadenza, even before the marked *Meno mosso* ('less rapid') – the flute solo that follows does not so much float in as cautiously place its notes to match Fedorova's unusually slowish tempo. Things improve with the second movement and the lively finale, though the final peroration, gentle and good-natured here, lacks a sense of hard-won triumph. *Daniel Jaffé*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Weber

Clarinet Concertos Nos 1 & 2; Der Freischütz – 'Leise, leise, fromme Weise' (arr. Tarkmann); Variations on a theme from Silvana (arr. Schottstädt)
Roeland Hendrikx (clarinet); Rheinische Philharmonie/ Michel Tilkin
Evil Penguin EPRC 0053 66:15 mins

Like Mozart before him and Brahms after, Weber wrote all his important clarinet works for a single outstanding player – in his case, Heinrich Baermann, the clarinettist of the Munich court orchestra. Baermann took an active role in shaping the solo part of Weber's concertos, adding decorations and contributing a large-scale cadenza to the First Concerto's opening movement. The Belgian clarinettist Roeland Hendrikx adopts all of Baermann's additions, but has furthermore commissioned the composer Andreas Tarkmann to write a full-scale cadenza for the last movement.

Prompted by the patently operatic nature of both concertos, Tarkmann also provides an inventive arrangement of Agathe's second-act aria 'Leise, leise' from Weber's masterpiece *Der Freischütz*, making free use of the passages in recitative style that separate the aria's verses in the original aria.

The variations on a theme from Weber's earlier opera *Silvana* are no masterpiece, but by using Baermann's decorations for the repeats Hendrikx saves them from tedium. His compatriot Michel Tilkin conducts the Rheinische Philharmonie sympathetically, and Hendrikx plays brilliantly throughout, rattling off the dizzying final pages of the Second Concerto at breakneck speed. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Armenian Cello Concertos

Works by Khachaturian, Babajanian, Michel Petrossian
Alexander Chaushian (cello); Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra/Eduard Topchjan
BIS BIS-2648 (CD/SACD) 68:30 mins

Is there such a thing as an Armenian sound? The three concertos gathered here might suggest there is one, if you go by the liner note. Alexander Chaushian makes much of the Armenian and Georgian folk elements in the Khachaturian work, talking of its Georgian dances and its use of the (Armenian) Ashug improvisatory style, while Michel Petrossian, introducing his own concerto, goes on at length to explain how Armenia's holy mountain – Ararat – has inspired both the work's texture and its structure.

Its title, he says, refers to the first mention of Ararat in the *Book of Genesis*, and the proportions of his work correspond symbolically to the proportions of the mountain; he then goes into detail about the contrasts between the writing for each movement, and points to the incorporation of Armenian and Byzantine liturgical chants. But you'd have to listen with extremely close attention to this 12-minute work if you wanted to catch everything the composer says he has put into it. It's highly condensed, with the cello moving gracefully through thickets of sound created by strings, high woodwind and piano, and it invites us into an interesting sonic environment, but there's little discernibly Armenian in that sound.

Babajanian's Concerto does in several ways sound a dark mysteriousness which might be thought Armenian. But its beauty lies in its finely wrought effects, brought into high relief by the refinement of Chaushian's playing.

Khachaturian – often celebrated as the musical voice of Armenia – is represented by a work which has echoes of his ballet *Gayaneh*. But essentially it's a mid-century European work, full-bloodedly tonal, and rich in invention, and Chaushian's expressive style highlights its many virtues. I immediately needed to listen again, to savour both the effects and the brilliance with which they are knitted together. *Michael Church*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Beethoven and Beyond

Beethoven: Violin Concerto; **plus works by Kreisler, Saint-Saëns, Spohr, Wieniawski and Ysaÿe**
María Dueñas (violin); Vienna Symphony Orchestra/ Manfred Honeck
DG 486 3512 97:45 mins (2 discs)

Beethoven's Violin Concerto is not without its problems. After a chaotic, barely rehearsed premiere in 1806, it didn't really surface until 1844 when the 12-year-old Joseph Joachim performed it in London with Mendelssohn conducting to enormous acclaim. From then on it became a touchstone for composers and performers where violin concertos were concerned. Among the problems, and hereby hangs the subtitle of the present issue, *Beyond Beethoven*, is the absence of cadenzas by Beethoven for the violin version.

Over the years composers and performers have attempted with varying success to fill the gap. María Dueñas, as well as supplying her own substantial cadenzas, gathers five for the first movement by some distinguished composers, pairing each with one of their shorter pieces for violin and orchestra. Of the five, Saint-Saëns's is the most fascinating for its ingenious handling of motifs from the first movement.

Dueñas's performance favours the Concerto's abundant lyrical qualities. In the magical *Larghetto* she combines unaffected simplicity with rich sentiment while her account of the 'Rondo' is certainly joyous, but thoughtful rather than rollicking. Less convincingly, she opts for a decidedly measured tempo in the first movement which lasts just short of 28 minutes. While her playing is always compelling, the final impression is more of a sequence of exquisite miniatures than a presentation of Beethoven's full symphonic canvas.

Vividly recorded, Manfred Honeck and the Vienna Symphony provide alert, well balanced accompaniments. *Jan Smaczny*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

La Cremona

Durante: Concerto in G minor; **Leo:** Concerto for 4 violins in D; **Locatelli:** Concerto for 4 Violins in F, Op. 4/12; **Sammartini:** Concerto for 4 violins in A; **Vivaldi:** Concerto for 3 violins in F, RV 551; Concerto for 4 Violins and Viola in B flat, RV 553
Berliner Barock Solisten/ Reinhard Goebel
Hanssler Classic HC22084 68:26 mins

This programme is of Italian concertos, mainly for four violins, from the early to mid-18th century. These are generally in the *galant* style, implying elegance, grace and unashamedly intended to please the senses. All these qualities feature to a greater or lesser extent in the five interestingly contrasted works on this album, though older contrapuntal disciplines have not been entirely abandoned. Leonardo Leo's D major Concerto for four violins illustrates both sides of the coin with a fugal movement, a *Moderato* in the dance metre of a siciliano, and a joyous formally uncomplicated *Allegro* finale.

Vivaldi comfortably holds his own here for melodic lyricism. In the first movement of the Concerto in F major, RV551, one of three violin soloists weaves an alluring cantilena over an arpeggio accompaniment in the last of the solo episodes. The expressive *Andante* which follows feels hard driven, offering minimal contrast with the flanking movements. Elsewhere, as in the finale of the other Vivaldi piece, this one for four violins, RV553, tempos are well judged. Compared with Vivaldi, the Locatelli concerto, from his Op. 4, seems rather tame though not devoid of charm. World-premiere status is awarded a Concerto in A major for four violins by GB Sammartini. It's an attractive piece, yet hardly a mention of the composer and none of the work is made in Reinhard Goebel's extensive essay. Furthermore ten years has been knocked off the poor fellow's life-span. He died in 1775, not 1765. In all, though, an engaging release .*Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Opera

OPERA CHOICE

A ravishing revival from Rizzi and co.

Christopher Cook **is thrilled by this performance of Mercadante's *Il Proscritto***

Mercadante

Il Proscritto

Ramón Vargas, Irene Roberts, Iván Ayón-Rivas, Sally Matthews, Goderdzi Janelidze; Opera Rara Chorus; Britten Sinfonia/Carlo Rizzi

Opera Rara 9293800622

124:04 mins (2 discs)

It's a mystery why Mercadante's *Il Proscritto* from the 1840s should have been banished to the archives. Salvatore Cammarano's well-structured libretto transports us confidently to the invented Scotland of Donizetti and Bellini, while Saverio Mercadante cocks an intelligent ear in the direction of a young Verdi. However, Mercadante is no faithful follower of fashion, as Carlo Rizzi, who rediscovered the opera in the Naples Conservatory archives, demonstrates in a vivid performance. We know from Opera Rara's earlier recordings of his music that Mercadante was a consummate orchestrator with an ear for telling instrumentation. There are trombones for the tomb that awaits Malvina, torn between her new man Arturo, and a rippling harp for the dreams of her supposedly drowned husband, Giorgio, a Stuart supporter. While Cromwell's man Arturo has a plaintive horn and pizzicato strings tip-toeing around his plot against his rival.

Mercadante wrote for a stellar cast, and Opera Rara field fine singers too. Ramón Vargas makes a tortured Giorgio, though sometimes a little stretched in the upper register. But as his rival – unusually a second tenor – the young Peruvian Iván Ayón-Rivas, who won the Operalia two years ago, is at the top of his game. As is Irene Roberts's Malvina with lush tone and real heartache in the remarkable finale to the last act, where the composer lets his three principals rule the stage. As the metaphorical curtain falls Malvina is dead, but Rizzi and Opera Rara have indeed brought her opera back to life.

Peruvian tenor Iván Ayón-Rivas is at the top of his game

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

RECORDING ★★★★★

Real heartache: Irene Roberts is a stunning Malvina

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Marais

Ariane et Bacchus

Véronique Gens, David Tricou, Mathias Vidal, Judith van Wanroij; Les Chantres du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles; Le Concert Spirituel/Hervé Niquet

Alpha Classics ALPHA 926

126:25 mins (2 discs)

Now remembered mainly as a master player and composer of viol music (and as a pupil of Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe – as depicted in the 1991 film *Tous les Matins du Monde*), Marin Marais was also a serious opera composer. He first learned his trade as one of Lully's composition pupils, and then as the older composer's music assistant.

Lully's influence is strongly evident in this world-premiere recording of Marais's 1696 *tragédie en musique, Ariane et Bacchus*. Urgent tempos, glowing choruses and spirited dance sections are all there. So are languorous recitatives, some shapeless arias and long stretches of perfunctory orchestral writing. The meandering libretto by Saint-Jean doesn't help, and the work is saddled with a plodding and sycophantic Prologue dedicated to the glory of Louis XIV. Things get moving after Act I, when Marais begins to experiment and innovate with comic ensembles, a haunting dream sequence and an astonishing mad scene for Ariane.

Judith van Wanroij is radiant in the title role, but her vocal steeliness is occasionally a little too brittle. Mathias Vidal is consistently warm and seductive as Bacchus, while Véronique Gens appears as a powerfully commanding Juno – initially in league with Bacchus's love rival, Adraste, sung with muscular intensity by David Witczak. Hervé Niquet conducts Le Concert Spirituel with characteristic vigour in a historically informed performance shorn of instrumental 'trinkets'. The spacious acoustics of the Jean-Baptiste Lully Conservatoire auditorium add amplitude to the joyous singing of Versailles' Centre de Musique Baroque chorus. *John-Pierre Joyce*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★

RECORDING ★★★★

Spontini

La vestale

Marina Rebeka, Stanislas de Barbeyrac, Tassis Christoyannis; Flemish Radio Choir; Les Talens Lyriques/Christophe Rousset

Bru Zane BZ1051 132:03 mins (2 discs)

First staged in Paris in 1807, Gaspare Spontini's *tragédie lyrique* quickly became one of the most admired works of its time, equalling Gluck's dramatic

purposiveness while adding in a heightened grandeur that impressed the likes of Beethoven, Berlioz and Wagner. Modern revivals are infrequent, though the piece proved a marvellous vehicle for Callas when in 1955 she sang at La Scala the role of Julie, the Vestal Virgin who betrays her vows and must be punished by being buried alive (fortunately there's a happy ending).

Based on recent scholarly research in a manner that continues to do the record company Palazzetto Bru Zane enormous credit, this new studio recording offers not only musicologically scrupulous foundations but benefits from the period-instrument forces of Les Talens Lyriques, who are intent upon the drama contained within the Italian-born, French-resident composer's austerely lyrical score. If there are occasional blemishes – the natural horns are not invariably up to the technical demands required – overall conductor Christophe Rousset leads an interpretation that captures the work's qualities of mystery and passion.

Of the three central roles, Marina Rebeka's Julie is vocally a shade on the small side while nevertheless encompassing the all-too-human nature of the priestess who breaks her sacred vows. The word-sensitive Stanislas de Barbeyrac portrays her lover Licinius in a light but lyrical manner. As his friend Cinna, the emphatic Tassis Christoyannis offers the right type and scale of vocalism, though is not always musically exact. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Vivaldi

Serenata a tre, RV690
Marie Lys, Sophie Rennert, Anicio Zorzi Giustiniani; Abchordis Ensemble/Andrea Buccarella
Naïve OP7901 67:25 mins

Vivaldi's enchanting Arcadian idyll dates from c1716. This miniature opera concerns the attempt of a nymph, Eurilla, to seduce a freedom-loving shepherd, Alcindo. With the help of Nice, her companion, Eurilla makes Alcindo fall in love with her, but when he at last admits that he really does love her she refuses to believe him and calls upon nymphs and shepherds to punish his arrogance.

The music is a delight throughout, and the performance mainly of a high standard. Marie Lys is a spirited Eurilla. Her coloratura in 'Vorresti lusingarni' is lightly articulated and admirably controlled. Sophie Rennert's Nice is comparably impressive; her arias 'Come l'erba', and 'Ad infiammar' with Boris Begelman's scintillating violin accompaniment are affecting. Anicio Zorzi Giustiniani (Alcindo) brings lively characterisation to the role but his 'Acque placide' lacks the tender lyricism of Alessio Tosi in a competing version of the serenata directed by Federico Maria Sardelli, issued last year (Glossa). Wearing my retro hat for just a moment, perhaps the most tenderly alluring account of this beautiful aria exists in a recording issued exactly 70 years ago, directed by Edwin Loehrer, on the Vox label. For this alone, but also for the evocative Arcadian sleeve design by the Italian artist Silvano Tintori, the recording is well worth looking out for.

In all, Andrea Buccarella, his soloists and his vibrant Abchordis Ensemble do justice to an irresistible score. Readers who want the fuller picture, though, will require the Sardelli version, too, since each contains an aria not included in the other. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Contra-Tenor

Arias by Galuppi, Gluck, Handel, Hasse, Latilla, Lully, Mazzoni, Messe, Mozart, Piccinni, Porpora, Rameau, Sarro, Vinci and Vivaldi
Michael Spyres (tenor); Il Pomo d'Oro/Francesco Corti
Erato 5419729346 72:54 mins

Michael Spyres is a fine American singer who has already issued notable recordings of works by Handel, Mozart, Rossini and others. The title of this album, *Contra-Tenor*, is a bit confusing since usually a contra-tenor is a part name (sung against the tenor in polyphony), and a counter-tenor is a voice type (which he does not possess). What he does have is an impressive, very wide ranging tenor-baritone, and in this collection he valuably explores the historical emergence of such a voice type in opera c1680-c1780.

His technical strengths emerge clearly in the way in which he negotiates the switchback turns of Vivaldi's 'Cada pur sul capo' (from *Artabano*), the cascading melodies of Porpora's 'Nocchier, che mai non vide' (from *Germania*) and the cadenza from Piccinni's 'En butte aux fureurs' (from *Roland*) where he reaches a spectacular F above top C.

His emotional range is slightly less convincing. There is tenderness in Lully's 'Cessons de redouter' (from *Persée*), but the subtle interplay of loss and questioning in Gluck's 'J'ai perdu mon Eurydice' (from *Orphée*) is not clearly reflected in the vocal characterisation. Also his somewhat robust approach to phrasing tends to resist subtle shaping: for example at the commencement of Mozart's 'Se di lauri' (from *Mitridate*) we get full solidity on the first note even though the phrase starts with an upbeat and the stress falls on 'lauri'. (Bruce Ford's recording of this work provides a model). That said, this is a fascinating collection with several premiere recordings. *Anthony Pryer*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Monologues

Arias and Monologues by Bonis, Donizetti, Respighi, Rossini, Viardot, Wagner and Zingarelli
Anna Bonitatibus (mezzo), Adele d'Aronzo (piano)
Prospero Classical PROSP0068 80:59 mins (2 discs)

An artist who researches and performs worthwhile but forgotten music presents a selection of solo works that have largely fallen into obscurity.

Barely remembered these days even for his once popular opera *Giulietta e Romeo* (1796), Niccolò Zingarelli (1752-1837) is the composer of the monologue *Ero*, which narrates the story of Hero and Leander in a quasi-operatic scena some 24 minutes in length in which Bonitatibus is responsive both to the text and to Zingarelli's dramatically conceived setting.

Vocalist and pianist seize on the possibilities of Donizetti's *Saffo* – probably written for the composer's future wife to sing, and possibly to his own text – delivering the work's musical ideas with flair. Equally full of masterly invention, Rossini's *Giovanna d'Arco* is described by the singer as a 'mini-opera' which she attacks with sure and certain aim.

Composed in Paris in 1839 by a 26-year-old Wagner, *Les Adieux de Marie Stuart* once again finds in Bonitatibus an expert interpreter, her tone laden with emotion and her technical skills maximising its potential for virtuosity.

Even rarer is *Hermione* by the singer-composer Pauline Viardot, to a text from Racine's play *Andromaque*. Setting a translation of Shelley, Respighi's haunting 1911 *Aretusa* shows the influence of Debussy and Ravel in its flamboyant piano writing. In both, Bonitatibus's interpretations go to the heart of these extraordinary pieces. Collaborative pianist Adele D'Aronzo, meanwhile, presents some demanding accompaniments to impressive effect, while as a soloist she makes something special out of Mel Bonis's brilliantly effective dance for piano, *Salomé* (1909). *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

BACKGROUND TO...
Spontini's *La vestale*

Spontini enjoyed huge success in the first half of the 19th century with this three-act *tragédie lyrique*, though it endured a period of derision and revision after its initial completion in 1805. The premiere, which eventually came in December 1807 at Paris's L'académie imperiale de musique, was attended by Empress Josephine – who had more than a hand in making sure it saw the light of day. Audiences were won over by score, libretto (by Étienne de Jouy), staging and performances in equal measure, and its popularity spread to opera houses across Europe. It went on to receive its US premiere in 1828.

GETTY

Choral & Song

CHORAL & SONG CHOICE

Nothing to fear in this magnificent set

Christopher Purves spins a great yarn in German song, says *Christopher Cook*

My Soul, What Fear You?

Lieder and arias by JS Bach, Eisler, Mahler, Pfitzner, Schubert, Schumann, R Strauss and Weill
Christopher Purves (bass-baritone), Simon Lepper (piano)
King's College KGS0067 55:54 mins

Christopher Purves and Simon Lepper have designed an admirably ambitious programme with, one suspects, the help of Richard Stokes, Britain's living encyclopedia of lieder and song. It's not simply the range of the repertoire, which travels from Bach to Weill via Schubert, Schumann, Strauss and Hanns Eisler, but the thematic links that bind these songs together – the imminence of last things, the prison cell as tomb and exile as a cultural death. Yet, *My Soul, What Fear You?*, the quotation from Hans Pfitzner's setting of a monologue for the Protestant radical Jan Hus condemned to be burnt, gives this recital a shard of hope as well as its name.

Christopher Purves sings magnificently, spinning an enviable thread of legato through the narrative of each song. A consummate actor, too, with commanding diction, he invariably finds a distinctive colour and tone. There's a sneer from Schubert's gravedigger when recalling the dandies who fawned on the hand of the young beauty who died, restrained rage at the end of Mahler's 'Der Tamboursg'sell', and the almost physical ache of exile in Eisler's 'L'automne californien'. And he meets the fearsome low D in Strauss's 'Im Spätboot' without blinking!

Pianist Simon Lepper is a hand-in-glove partner throughout

Simon Lepper is a hand-in-glove partner throughout, coaxing gentle breezes from the piano and starting an avalanche of rocks to engulf Schumann's treasure digger. Then there's Gerard McBurney's arrangement of Bach's 'Ich habe genug' which borrows an accordion from 20th-century Berlin and adds flute, saxophone and guitar to make Bach with a sharp new bite.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Command performance: Christopher Purves is a consummate actor

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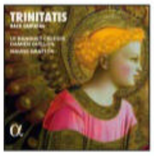
JS Bach – *Trinitatis*

Cantatas, BWV 47, 60 & 78; Trio Sonata No. 2 in C minor, BWV526; Prelude, BWV546
Céline Scheen (soprano), Thomas Hobbs (tenor), Benoît Arnould (bass); Le Banquet Céleste/Damien Guillon; Maude Gratton (organ)
Alpha Classics ALPHA945 73:58 mins



Flanked by two Trinity cantatas in G minor, not to mention organ interludes cast in C minor, Cantata 60's sunburst of D major cuts a welcome dash. But context apart, framed as a dialogue between fear and hope, what a remarkable conception that work is, its opening masterfully entwining fretfulness and reassurance as the organ reinforces the embedded chorale melody. Even the closing chorale is ear-turning, its harmonisation transcendental (incorporated by Alban Berg so hauntingly into his Violin Concerto). And before it, how modern-sounding the bass interpolation of 'Selig sind die Toten', calmly punctuating the alto's trepidatious recitative.

Despite the album's preponderance of minor keys, the programme never seems oppressive thanks to Damien Guillon's judicious direction which cultivates an almost understated poise buttressed by a sure yet unfussy grasp of illuminating detail. The opening chorus of BWV78 is beautifully modulated as the troubled chromaticism and ostinato patterning meld to convey the bitterness of Christ's death. The duet that follows is irresistibly joyous, underpinned by the exuberantly pointed accompaniment; and, spurred on by Jean Bregnac's liquid flute, Thomas Hobbs's mellifluous tenor radiates quiet reassurance as the aria 'Das Blut, so meine Schuld durchstreicht' unfolds.

Throughout, the instrumental playing is a delight. Maude Gratton leavens the cantatas with a spirited account of the organ Trio Sonata BWV526; and proves suitably magisterial in the Prelude BWV546 which, it turns out, shares motivic DNA with the opening of Cantata 47 – waiting impatiently in the wings, its energised polyphony champing at the bit. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Górecki

Church Songs, Op. 84
Polish Chamber Choir/ Jan Łukaszewski
Ondine ODE1428-2D 99:31 mins (2 discs)

One of the great originals of modern music, the Polish composer Henryk Górecki has long been misunderstood. The trouble began not so much with

TALL WALL MEDIA

the premiere of his *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs* in 1977 but with its belated and bestselling success in 1992. Dawn Upshaw's chart-topper skewed everyone's view not only of the Symphony but of Górecki's entire output going back to his firebrand days as leader of the Polish avant-garde.

Even during that modernist period, his spirituality was never concealed, but his deeply-held Catholicism began to emerge more clearly in the mid 1970s, notably with an ethereal, thick-textured *Amen*. Anyone hoping to hear that – or his supplicatory masterpiece *Totus Tuus* – here may be disappointed. This collection of church song arrangements is more modest in its scope and shows Górecki tackling a task normally left to local organists.

Mostly dating from 1986 but published in 2013, three years after the composer's death, these 20 pieces range from between one and almost 13 minutes in duration. Recorded in Latin for the first time, they have a consoling lilt and occasionally (as in 'Sicut parvi amplectamur') dance along gently; 'Beati qui eligunt Joseph' is a rare example of a more striking harmonic treatment. Under its conductor of 40 years' standing, Jan Łukaszewski, the Gdańsk-based Polish Chamber Choir produces a beautifully smooth and glowing tone. The overall effect is sweet, like eating too much *sernik* (Polish cheesecake) and washing it down with communion wine. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Liszt

Orchestral Songs: Die Lorelei; Titan; Die Vätergruft; Le Juif Errant; Die drei Zigeuner etc.
Sunhae Im (soprano), Stephanie Houtzeel (mezzo-soprano), Thomas Hampson (baritone), Tomasz Konieczny (bass-baritone); Chorus Viennensis; Orchester Wiener Akademie/Martin Haselböck
Aparté AP324 65:27 mins

Martin Haselböck is a seasoned Lisztian who, together with his Orchester Wiener Akademie, has cultivated a period-informed approach to works familiar and less so. In this latest album of orchestral songs there are no fewer than three premiere recordings, including 'Die Vätergruft', orchestrated in Liszt's final year and premiered in London just a few months before his death. In a sense he was composing his own sepulchral 'abschied'. Eerie percussion, spectral trombones and trumpets striking a heroic attitude, preface a *sotto voce* ending wherein the protagonist surrenders to death's inescapable embrace. Receiving first recordings, too, are 'Weimars Toten', a centenary salute to Goethe, and 'Der Titan' – in an incarnation adding male voice chorus to the mix, Tomasz Konieczny the robustly stentorian storyteller.

From 1860 comes a clutch of Schubert song arrangements as well of three of Liszt's own. The results are mixed. In 'Die junge Nonne' the orchestral storm lumbers somewhat, though 'Erlkönig' offers a more tempestuous ride, Thomas Hampson firmly in the saddle, and bent on not reducing the voice of the child to mere caricature. Most successful of all is 'Der Doppelgänger', swaddled in the sombre hues of lower strings. To open, Liszt's own 'Die Lorelei' is given an enrapt, velvet-toned account by mezzo Stephanie Houtzeel, and Haselböck proves highly attentive to Liszt's orchestral palette – especially as the song nears its churning, eddying climax. Thomas Hampson shoulders the lion's share of the songs, and if vocally the result is a little uneven, there's no gainsaying his clarion command, exemplary diction and perceptive narration. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Maconchy • Vaughan Williams

Songs, Vol. 2: Maconchy: The Garland; How Samson Bore Away the Gates of Gaza; The Exequy etc; **Vaughan Williams:** The House of Life; Four Last Songs
James Geer (tenor), Ronald Woodley (piano)
Resonus RES10317 77:22 mins

The final instalment of Resonus's two-part parade of songs by Vaughan Williams and his sometime pupil Elizabeth Maconchy offers as much food for thought and delight as its predecessor. VW's two song sets – one early, one late – comfort the ear more regularly than Maconchy's harder, less familiar creations, some of them unearthed among archive manuscripts during the performers' research. But whatever the music, the forthright and sympathetic approach of tenor James Geer and pianist Ronald Woodley always makes listening a pleasure.

Geer means and feels every word he sings. His immense care over diction is especially necessary in *The House of Life*, VW's florid early setting of equally elaborate poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. How crisply he separates the inner consonants in the word 'kingcup'; how easily he tosses off 'hautboy' and 'gonfalon'.

Nor is he discomfited by Vachel Lindsay's period Americana, though the troubadour poet's 'How Samson Bore Away the Gates of Gaza' is a decidedly odd choice of text for Maconchy. She's at her considerable best, though, in 'The Exequy', a starkly powerful 1956 setting of death-haunted lines by John Donne's contemporary, Henry King. The gentler observations of the Greek cycle *The Garland* also appeal. VW, meanwhile, shines most strongly and personally in the limpid *Four Last Songs*, drawn from poems by Ursula Wood, his eventually second wife. Through it all, Woodley's accompaniments give Geer and the music exactly the support each song requires. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Vocal riches: Joseph Calleja is on top form in sacred arias

A Mahler

Complete Songs
Elise Caluwaerts (soprano), Marianna Shirinyan (piano)
Fuga Libera FUG796 65:10 mins

Alma Mahler was a prolific composer of songs and chamber works from her teens until the moment she married Gustav. In an infamous 20-page letter, he insisted Alma gave up composing as a precondition of their getting married. He later recanted, her affair with Walter Gropius the urgent prompt. Fourteen songs were published in her lifetime, with a further three discovered since, from at least 46 named songs and some 30-odd more untitled that she wrote in her early life.

Opening with the *Fünf Lieder*, edited by Gustav and the first of Alma's works to be published in 1910, soprano Elise Caluwaerts and pianist Marianna Shirinyan's

dedication to reviving the spirit of Alma extends to using a Steinway from 1899, its rich, warm, expansive acoustic distinctive of its era. Yet it is Shirinyan's expressive playing of it which is the key, exploiting every nuance in the score, never afraid to use its full volume or quiet rapture.

Mahler's works are like little dramas, melancholy, richly sung, sometimes seeming as if they are too big for the medium – a hint of the Wagnerian. 'In meines Vaters Garten' has an aesthetic very firmly of its early 19th-century milieu, and Caluwaerts, always dedicated, polishes the ebb and flow of Mahler's line. 'Einsamer Gang', a work written when she was barely out of her teen years and only recently rediscovered, is recorded for the first time here – anxious, deeply-felt, rich, dramatic. But there are moments where the balance is off between singer and piano, perhaps particularly in those first *Fünf Lieder*. *Sarah Urwin Jones*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Ave Maria

Sacred arias by Bizet, Mascagni, Massenet, Schubert, Verdi et al
Joseph Calleja (tenor), Malta Philharmonic Orchestra/ Sergey Smbatyan
Decca 485 3944 61:31 mins

Collections of popular sacred pieces – and pretty well all recorded here falls into that category – are often compromised by either poor arrangements or a sentimental approach that compromises the material itself. Neither of these strictures applies here. The Maltese tenor is on top form, his voice rich and fluid, with lovely, pure Latin colours and keen textual enunciation, the result achieving those hard-to-define qualities of conviction and sincerity.

Whether it's the arrangement of the 'big-tune' in the *Cavalleria rusticana* Intermezzo, or Adolphe Adam's 'O Holy Night', Calleja feels right inside the music, offering a heightened emotional charge; yet equally the lavish phrases and impassioned delivery of the Agnus Dei posthumously adapted from Bizet's incidental music to *L'arlésienne* never sound overblown. He remains throughout a stylish artist, his widely varied tone and dynamics shot through with considerable delicacy of expressive feeling.

Calleja also captures the rhythmic jauntiness of the 'Cujus animam' from Rossini's Stabat Mater perfectly while proving equally energised in the 'Domine Deus' from the same composer's *Petite Messe Solennelle* – a solo he negotiates with faultless breath control and impressive ease of access to his top register.

Wagner – perhaps surprisingly – proves to be congenial territory in the shape of confident and exciting accounts of the prayer from *Rienzi* and 'Der Engel' from the *Wesendonck Lieder*. Contributions from violinist Daniel Hope and baritone Etienne Dupuis (the latter partnering Calleja in 'The Pearl Fishers' duet) are nicely done. Both orchestra and conductor make a good showing. *George Hall*

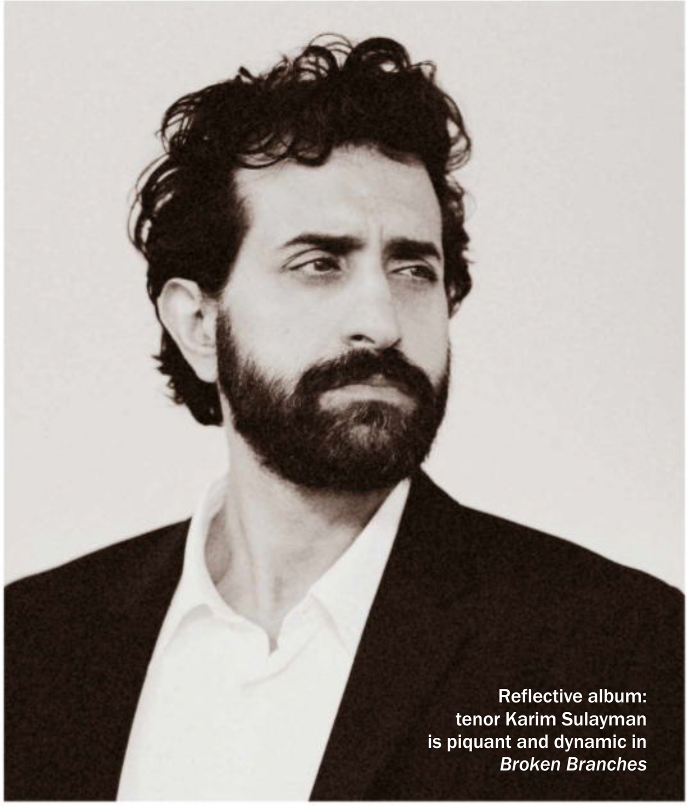
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Broken Branches

Britten: Songs from the Chinese; **plus songs by Caccini, Chaker, Darwish, Dowland, J Harvey, Monteverdi, Takemitsu et al**
Karim Sulayman (tenor), Sean Shibe (guitar)
Pentatone PTC 5187 031 51:16 mins

This reflective album from tenor Karim Sulayman and guitarist Sean Shibe explores ideas of home, statehood and identity as expressed (or indeed complicated) by music. Both performers have roots in more than one cultural tradition – Sulayman is a first-generation Lebanese-American, while Edinburgh-raised Shibe was born to an English father and Japanese mother – and the album is at once a journey and a conversation, traversing time and geography through repertoire to unpick how music can both stabilise and unsettle us.

The programme ranges from Monteverdi's borrowed 'Eastern' modalities in 'La mia turca' to a new arrangement of the traditional Sephardic song 'La Prima Vez'. Subverting the customary flow of musical 'borrowing', the album also includes an appealing rendition of Lebanese singer Fairuz's 1984 ballad 'Li Beirut', a song which takes as its melody the iconic slow-movement theme from Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*. The album's prevailing mood of meditation and lamentation is expressed most profoundly in the new commission 'A Butterfly in New York' by Layale Chaker which draws on both Western and Arabic soundworlds to trace the splintering of a family tree into the global diaspora.



Reflective album: tenor Karim Sulayman is piquant and dynamic in *Broken Branches*

CAMILLA GREENWELL

Shibe brings a lively charisma and a vibrant array of musical colour to the album, conjuring everything from 17th-century lute to Arabic oud across this wide-reaching programme. Sulayman's performance at times feels too restrained, but his interpretation of Britten's *Songs from the Chinese* has a wonderful piquancy and dynamism, and brings this thoughtful release to a rewarding close. *Kate Wakeling*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Divine Music
– An English Songbook

Thomas Adès: The Lover in Winter; Coffee-Spoon Cavatina; **Butterworth:** A Shropshire Lad; **Nico Muhly:** Traditional Songs; New Made Tongue; Old Bones; **plus songs by Croft, Howells and Purcell**
Iestyn Davies (countertenor), Joseph Middleton (piano)
Signum Classics SIGCD 725 82:20 mins

'Clarity, brilliance, tenderness and strangeness' were the qualities Britten found in Purcell's music, and they're all evident in Britten's arrangement of 'Lord, What is Man?' which opens countertenor Iestyn Davies's recital. Little if anything phases Davies technically: he pins the setting's wide intervals with laser accuracy, and easily encompasses the trickily embellished closing 'Hallelujah'.

Purcell's 'strangeness' is memorably distilled in Thomas Adès's arrangement of 'An Evening Hymn', where pianist Joseph Middleton weighs sensitively the probing piano part, and Davies lends to the vocal line an increasingly numinous presence. Adès's own song cycle *The Lover in Winter* is included, the ice-like angularities of the piano part contrasting vividly with Davies's hovering, velvet-soft vocalism.

The *Four Traditional Songs* by Nico Muhly were premiered by Davies in 2011, and are specially interesting for the minimalistic yet highly expressive piano part Muhly provides to underpin the old folk melodies. Davies and Middleton slot

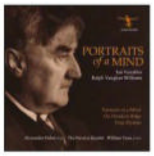
together seamlessly, equal partners in the heartworn melancholy Muhly forefronts in these settings. Muhly's ability to communicate at least as much through the piano as in the vocal writing is further underlined in the mini-scena 'Old Bones', based on the discovery in 2012 of Richard III's remains in Leicester.

Davies's smoothly refined countertenor is less naturally suited to the dark, death-haunted melancholy of Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*, whose final verse is arguably over-milked for emotion. But taken whole this is a classy and interestingly varied recital, with unfailingly sensitive contributions from both performers. *Terry Blain*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Portraits of a Mind

Vaughan Williams: On Wenlock Edge; Four Hymns (arr. Farrington); **Ian Venables:** Portraits of a Mind
Alessandro Fisher (tenor), William Vann (piano); The Navarra Quartet
Albion ALBCD 057 59:03 mins



Ian Venables's *Portraits of a Mind* (for tenor, piano and string quartet) was commissioned by the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society for the sesquicentenary of the composer's birth in 2022, and this is its first recording. The same performers who gave the premiere at the Oxford Lieder Festival are featured, and play the piece with practiced authority. The cycle's five songs are exceptionally well sung by Alessandro Fisher, who convincingly encompasses emotions stretching from the balmy pastoralism of the opening 'The Lark Ascending' (with chirruping near-quotations from VW), to the pained retrospection of the Rossetti setting 'Echo'.

The incisive playing of the Navarra Quartet comes vividly to the fore in Vaughan Williams's own *On Wenlock Edge*. The players' constant swirl of energy in the opening song, combined with fluttering tremolandos, exactly catch the sense of disquieted alarm VW intended. Fisher is again excellent, especially in a wrenching performance of 'Is my team ploughing?', the equal of any on record.

Iain Farrington's arrangement of *Four Hymns* for the same voice-piano-quartet formation rounds out the recital, and will interest VW completists. But it's Fisher's *On Wenlock Edge* which is the true jewel of this particular collection. *Terry Blain*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Le Voyage

Debussy: Trois chansons de Bilitis; **Koechlin:** Shéhérazade – excerpts; **Ravel:** Shéhérazade; Cinq mélodies populaires grecques; Vocalise-étude en forme de habanera etc; **plus songs by Bizet and Viardot**
Alexandra Lowe (soprano), Patrick Milne (piano)
Champs Hill CHRCD 169 58:56 mins

Anglophone singers usually have more trouble with French than with German or Italian, both with the intermediate vowels and, no less, with the rhythms. So full marks to Alexandra Lowe for her command of both, especially in the settings by Debussy and Koechlin of Pierre Louÿs's prose poems *Chansons de Bilitis*. If everything on the album was of this standard, with Patrick Milne a sensitive accompanist, it would undoubtedly be worth five stars. He can be forgiven for struggling with the opening keyboard texture of 'Asie' in Ravel's *Shéhérazade*, which is as nearly unplayable as makes no matter. But another plus is Lowes's acceptance of marked slides in the third song of the work. For a long time now, slides have had a bad press as being sloppy and vulgar, but in pre-war recordings of the French repertoire they're standard fare.

Elsewhere here, however, there's an annoying lack of respect for the musical text. It's surely illogical to claim 'a particular affinity' with this repertoire, and then ignore its detail. My Beckmesserish scratchings come to 15, and these refer only to the major infractions. Two of them must suffice here, from Bizet's *Ouvre ton Coeur* where, in verse two, an abrupt transition from *ff* to *pp* is ignored, while Lowe fails to join the piano in the final bars, as marked. Her tone in the low and middle registers is warm and expressive, and only in the higher reaches would I ideally have liked a slightly less evident vibrato. *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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Chamber

CHAMBER CHOICE

Beethoven with devilment and delicacy

Stephen Johnson enjoys the fun and focus in these violin sonata recordings

Beethoven

Violin Sonatas: No. 2 in A, Op. 12 No. 2; No. 4 in A minor, Op. 23; No. 9 in A, Op. 47, 'Kreutzer'
Antje Weithaas (violin), Dénes Várjon (piano)
CAvi-music AVI 8553512 75:45 mins

Bizarre as it seems now, there was a time when it used to be said routinely that Beethoven had no sense of humour. Clearly we could have done with performances like these back then. Humour, wit, playfulness – they all explode into life in the artful hands of Antje Weithaas and Dénes Várjon. Granted, the playfulness can be more tiger-like than kittenish (or even devilish in the first movement of the 'Kreutzer' Sonata), but there's a delicate touch as well.

Then on top of that there are those breath-stopping moments (for example in parts of the 'Kreutzer's variation-form second movement) where it seems Beethoven is both emoting operatically and sending himself up at the same time. And crucially, these are very much shared performances. We are not listening to a star violinist with piano accompaniment, but two minds discussing, sometimes arguing ferociously, over the same issues.

Their attention to detail is the kind that really grips the ear, right from the opening of Op. 12 No. 2, but it's balanced by a secure sense of the long line – no matter how mindful we may be of this or that arresting tiny phrase or harmonic twist, the sense of where the music is headed is never forgotten. It's very refreshing, too, to hear a performance of that famous 'Kreutzer' first movement which, for all its impassioned drive, never forgets that dialogue between the instruments is central to the musical argument.

> Their attention to detail is the kind that really grips the ear

The recordings are excellent too: we're in there with the players, perhaps even looking at the music over their shoulders, and yet it doesn't feel too close. There's just enough distance to keep the picture clear.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

In dialogue: Antje Weithaas is one half of this great conversation

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CPE Bach

Sonatas for Keyboard and Violin
Rachel Podger (violin), Kristian Bezuidenhout (fortepiano)
Channel Classics CCSSA41523 (CD/SACD) 73:01 mins

Had JS Bach lived another 15 years what would he have made of his son CPE's four sonatas for keyboard and violin written in 1763? The musical world they inhabit is some distance from that of the G minor Sonata H542.5 which opens this album – a sonata once thought to be by 'Papa' Bach but now considered likely to be a collaborative effort. Across the later sonatas Kristian Bezuidenhout and Rachel Podger savour the qualities of coaxing, pleading, playfulness and arresting quirkiness that signal their identification with the so-called *Empfindsamer Stil*. But nothing is ever cut and dried. The keyboard opening of the B minor Sonata, composed some three decades after its G minor cousin, sounds like a throwback to the teenage work. And, rich in *Empfindsamer* fingerprints, the *Arioso* with five variations proves to be a 1780 respray of an earlier work.

At one level, Bezuidenhout and Podger help to pinpoint the chronology, allotting a handsome-sounding copy of an 1805 Walther fortepiano to the later works and a Taskin-inspired harpsichord to the products of the 1730s. It's just one example of the thoughtfulness with which they approach a set of performances that are as equally persuasive in the bustling, youthful incisiveness of the G minor and D major Sonatas, as in the pristinely-paced, probingly expressive whimsy of the *Arioso*. Their music-making is infectiously spontaneous yet tellingly 'considered' – seamless rapport and impeccably-judged articulation delighting in a stream of illuminating felicities. CPE Bach's free-spirited sonatas have surely found their free-spirited match.
Paul Riley

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Franck • Vierne

Franck: Piano Quintet; Violin Sonata; Piano Trio No. 1; **Vierne:** Piano Quintet
Catherine Montier (violin), Christophe Gaugué (viola); Trio Wanderer
Harmonia Mundi HMM 902318.19 111:18 mins (2 discs)

Franck's Piano Quintet was recognised from the outset as a work of deep, possibly forbidden, passions. His wife believed it to be evidence of an affair. Saint-Saëns walked off stage after the first performance, pointedly leaving behind the score dedicated to him. Certainly, Trio

Wanderer, bolstered by Catherine Montier (violin) and Christophe Gaugué (viola), lack no fervour, confirming few works pack a greater emotional punch.

Vierne's extraordinary Piano Quintet follows in the footsteps of Franck's, and is every bit as intense but with raw grief rather than ardour. Written in the aftermath of his son's death during World War I, Vierne set out to 'bury him with a thunderous roar and not with the plaintive bleating of a resigned and foolish sheep'. It is an apposite choice here, not just for its affinity to Franck, readily apparent in this searing performance, but as a programmatic black armband in this two-disc set dedicated to the memory of pianist Nicholas Angelich.

In this context, Franck's evergreen Violin Sonata has a feeling of morning freshness. There is also plenty of vigour, especially in the fiery second movement, in a performance that is finely played if not quite challenging the best in a crowded field. The set concludes with Franck's first published Piano Trio, an early work that is no mere filler. Beethoven's shadow may loom large, as it does in the Quintet, but Franck's inventiveness and virtuosic handling of musical structures are already apparent, especially in Trio Wanderer's superlative performance. *Christopher Dingle*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Ailís Ní Ríain

The Last Time I Died*; Soberado; Parambassis†; Revelling/Reckoning†† etc.**
†Paul Roe (bass clarinet), †Laoise O'Brien (recorder), ††Evelyn Glennie, Tim Williams (percussion), **Xenia Pestova Bennett (toy piano) et al.; *Psappha; ††New London Chamber Ensemble/Darren Bloom
NMC NMCD270 66:47 mins

Perhaps starting one's latest recording with a composition for toy piano is something of a statement, but it's a joyous one at that. How could it not be? Many composers have written for toy piano, not least John Cage, but there is something about Ailís Ní Ríain's baldly earnest *Soberado*, that seems to embody both the tinny ridiculousness and the instrument's own tiny, reproduction-piano pride. It has character, you'd say, as it is played here with absolute precision and commitment by Xenia Pestova Bennett.

There's more in similar vein in the later *Parambassis*, a to-and-fro for bass clarinet and recorder inspired by the see-through glass fish. In the conversational midst, the quality of sound is entirely unselfconscious.

This album presents not just miniatures inspired by the visual and internal world, although the conversion of sight to sound is of huge importance for Ní Ríain as a deaf/hearing-impaired composer and writer. These are descriptive conversations in instrument, with a fascinating interest in marrying sounds and resonances, unusual yet instructive, from pre-recorded piano to cimbalon and bass flute. Ní Ríain counters sound against sound, weighing up the qualities of bass clarinet and recorder, or pre-recorded altered piano and violin. There is the otherworldly audio picture of *Seahorse (long-snouted)* and then in converse the driven *Revelling/Reckoning*, an extended two-part work for chamber ensemble and percussion – here Evelyn Glennie and the New London Chamber Ensemble, in an excellent playing of the work. *Sarah Urwin Jones*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

A seamless rapport: Rachel Podger and Kristian Bezuidenhout sizzle in CPE Bach

KAUPO KIKKAS, BROADWAY STUDIOS

Ravel

Piano Trio; Pavane pour une infante défunte (arr. trio); Le Tombeau de Couperin (arr. trio)
Linos Piano Trio
CAvi-music AVI 8553526 58:52 mins

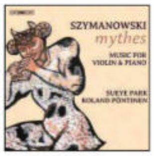
It's a great pleasure to hear Ravel's majestic and technically demanding Piano Trio without insertions of meaningless rubato, and with every note in place. The only thing I was left wishing for was a more scrupulous observation of his dynamic markings. The piano's opening four bars are a case in point: marked *pp*, they are clearly not intended as any kind of challenge. Since they incorporate the rhythm of the *zortzico*, a Basque dance, they would seem more likely to be a tender, nostalgic reference to that region where he was born and of which his mother was a native. Otherwise the work is carried off with splendid *éclat*.

The rest of the album is less alluring, being transcriptions made by the performers for themselves of *Pavane pour une infante défunte* and *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. Ravel's own transcriptions of his music all sound so obvious and straightforward, we tend to forget the profound craft that has gone into them. So it's no slur on Linos's musicianship to say they have been far less successful here. Instead of basking in the music's beauty, I found myself querying the disposition of the three instruments, asking 'Where did that tune go?' and 'Why double the strings there?'; also, in *Le Tombeau*, 'Why no trills at the end of the "Prélude"?' and especially, 'Why slow down at the end of the "Toccata"?' Given that Ravel wrote only one Piano Trio, I trust we shall be spared similar transcriptions of *Gaspard de la nuit* and *Valses nobles*. *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Szymanowski

Mythes; Violin Sonata; Nocturne & Tarantella; Romance; Lullaby
Sueye Park (violin), Roland Pöntinen (piano)
BIS BIS-2652 (CD/SACD) 68:15 mins



Karol Szymanowski's substantial Violin Sonata is the earliest work on this new release featuring his music for violin and piano, and receives the most satisfying performance here. Sueye Park and Roland Pöntinen have the measure of its late Romanticism, the violinist certainly supplying the sweetness called for in the middle movement's *Andantino tranquillo e dolce* indication. It's a work premiered by the composer's friends Paul Kochański and Arthur Rubinstein, no less. The great Polish violinist became dedicatee of the Romance in D major, a piece memorable for the manner in which it floats upwards and away at the end; Park's violin is not quite ethereal enough.

It doesn't help that both instruments are very closely recorded, the violin sounding almost glassy in *Mythes* – three pieces of vintage Szymanowski that comprise the real masterpiece on this programme. The concluding 'Dryades et Pan' sounds a little hard-edged, and despite keenly poised playing from both musicians there is an absence of mystery right from the opening bars of the first piece, 'La Fontaine d'Arethuse'. Both this triptych and the *Notturno and Tarantella* belong to Szymanowski's headily sensuous middle period. Park and Pöntinen capture the mystery of the Notturno and play the Tarantella – one of Syzmanowski's Sicilian souvenirs – with fire if not complete abandon. They end

with *La Berceuse d'Aïtacho Enia*, an elusive later work: it receives a decent account, though one suggesting these players haven't truly internalised this music. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Shadow Dances
– British Works for Flute

Alwyn: Flute Sonata; **Bax:** Four Pieces; **L Berkeley:** Sonatina; **Bowen:** Miniature Suite; Flute Sonata; **Ferguson:** Sketches, Op. 14; **Vaughan Williams:** Suite de Ballet
Adam Walker (flute), Huw Watkins (piano)
Chandos CHAN 20265 77:25 mins

Seventy-seven minutes of British music for flute and piano might at first glance seem like 40 minutes too much. But that's without taking on board the nimble and dazzling skills of flautist Adam Walker, or the individual strengths of the works presented – particularly York Bowen's 1946 Sonata and his much earlier (and not very small) *Miniature Suite*. With Huw Watkins, too, we know we're in for flexible and sensitive piano playing, responsive to every shadow and dance in all these pieces from the first half of the 20th century.

The two Bowen items never ignore the obvious delights of writing for the flute: the pastoral arabesques, the simulated bird song. But there's an added thoughtfulness to the composer's approach, even in the superficially slight material of his 1907 Suite. Four decades later in his Sonata, Bowen's post-Romantic universe remains intact, though with nothing sterile in any of its three movements, least of all in the brilliant scamper of the finale, marked *allegro con fuoco*.

In other pieces, it's fascinating to trace the foreign influences coming and going. French dance forms and echoes of English folk song mingle in Vaughan Williams's *Suite de Ballet*, while Bax's *Four Pieces*, extracted from a never-orchestrated ballet score written under the sway of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, usefully offer lighter alternatives to his voluptuously scintillating symphonies. A few pieces like Alwyn's Sonata promise more than they deliver, but a new pleasure is never far away in this most accomplished recital, full of the sounds of spring. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Less is more: Trio Wanderer packs a punch in its recording of Franck and Vierne

Sonate a quattro

Fasch: Sonata for 2 Violins, Viola & Continuo in D minor,; **Goldberg:** Sonata in C minor; **Handel:** Sonata in G, Op. 5 No. 4; **Janitsch:** Quatuor in D; **Telemann:** Sonata à 4
Johannes Pramsohler (violin); Ensemble Diderot
Audax ADX11201 55:56 mins

Poised between the Baroque trio sonata and the Classical string quartet, these works for two violins, viola and basso continuo by Baroque bigwigs Handel and Telemann and some of their less well-known contemporaries make for a stimulating programme. The music ranges from rigorous Teutonic counterpoint to the breezy *galant* style of the mid-18th century.

Harpsichordist-composer Johann Gottlieb Goldberg – the original performer of the *Goldberg Variations* – may also have been a pupil of Bach, and certainly his C minor Quartet Sonata has all the contrapuntal rigour of his probable teacher. Johann Friedrich Fasch looks both back and forwards in his Sonata à 4, whose fugal writing gives way to lyrical and soloistic passages. The felicitous G major Sonata by Handel (an adaptation of his Trio Sonata Op. 5 No. 4) scurries and banters and dances, while Telemann's A minor Quartet is an eclectic medley of programmatic imitations of a hunt, fleet fugato writing and a Corellian last movement. The world-premiere recording of Johann Gottlieb Janitsch's Quatuor in D major brings things to a close, its airy melodies and transparent textures epitomising the elegant style *galant*.

Ensemble Diderot's performances balance grace and gravitas in equal measure. The playing is stylish, agile, incisive – above all, characterised by rhetorical articulation, rhythmic drive (at times, a shade unyielding) and a robust, sinewy sound. The detailed recording in a fairly dry acoustic spotlights individual lines and details, so even the more complex contrapuntal textures are lucid. *Kate Bolton-Porciatti*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Spirits

Works by Brahms, Debussy, Elgar, Falla, Gluck, Kreisler
Daniel Lozakovich (violin), Stanislav Soloviev (piano)
DG 486 2492 (digital only) 27:03 mins

The baton – or rather, bow – is passed across the decades in *Spirits*, violinist Daniel Lozakovich's latest digital-only recital album. This celebrates some of the greatest interpreters of recent centuries: the silk-spun sound of David Oistrakh is channelled in Debussy's *Clair de lune*; Jascha Heifetz's biting zest cuts through Gluck's *Mélodie* from *Orfeo ed Euridice*; and Elgar's *La Capricieuse* is imbued with the soulful character associated with Josef Hassid. Each miniature is carefully considered and all are exquisitely recorded.

Lozakovich's own timbre (he plays the 1727 Stradivari loaned by the Louis Vuitton Foundation's museum and cultural centre in Paris where *Spirits* was recorded) is sweeter and fuller-bodied than Oistrakh's; Falla's *Danse espagnole No. 1* (from *La Vida Breve*) is spikier than Christian Ferras's. Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* (Nos 2 and 6) are rather less free-flowing than Leonid Kogan's. But in Kreisler's *Liebesleid* (from *Old Viennese Dances*) Lozakovich recreates the violinist-composer's rubato, and hints at his unfussy beauty in curt phrases. Now it's time to hear these repertoire stalwarts as Lozakovich himself would play them. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BACKGROUND TO... Vaughan Williams's *Suite de Ballet*

This short but beautifully expressive four-movement suite for flute and piano was commissioned by French flautist Louis Fleury around 1913/14. The actual date of composition has been oft-debated, as the piece was discovered among manuscripts and paperwork after Vaughan Williams's death in 1958 and was published thereafter for the first time. The composer shifted focus across the channel for this commission, choosing to feature movements based on early forms of French dance such as the Gavotte and Passepied.

MARCO BORGGREVE, GETTY

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In an album of world-premiere recordings, Steinway Artist Nicolas Costantinou performs 12 Préludes for solo piano by Constantinos Y. Stylianou, each inspired by a different work of art.

Stylianou was asked to compose music for solo piano to be performed at the Great Hall of the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in 2008. This resulted in two préludes, each one inspired by a work of art and influenced by Debussy's Préludes. Stylianou built on these origins until a cycle of 12 was completed, with pieces inspired by Mondrian, Cézanne, Turner, Campin, Friedrich, Giacometti, Klimt, Kandinsky, Diamantis and Rego. The result is a vivid, colourful series of préludes, each distinguished by a unique character, and by the personal approach to the instrument so characteristic of this composer's style.

Past Forward **is an album of world-premiere recordings showcasing the gifts of young Greek Cypriot composer Constantinos Y. Stylianou, performed by violist Máté Szűcs and Steinway artist Nicolas Costantinou.**

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An imaginative keyboard chronology

Alexander Melnikov's musical matches are inspired, says ***Jessica Duchen***

Fantasie – *Seven Composers, Seven Keyboards*

Works by CPE Bach, JS Bach, Busoni, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Mozart and Schnittke
Alexander Melnikov (harpsichord, fortepiano, tangent piano, piano)
Harmonia Mundi HMM 902702
68:24 mins

Alexander Melnikov is a multifaceted artist at the best of times, but his achievement here is quite remarkable. This programme of fantasias ranges from Bach to Schnittke, each performed on an instrument of an appropriate vintage. Several of the instruments are from Melnikov's own collection.

After playing JS Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* on a rich, glittery two-manual harpsichord (a modern copy of a German 17th/18th-century one), he moves on to an astonishing tangentenflügel (tangent piano) for CPE, an instrument that offers a startlingly wide, dreamlike range of colour. After Mozart on a copy of a 1795 Kern, Mendelssohn's Fantasia Op. 28 proves a special highlight, performed with windswept brilliance on a duskily mysterious Graf of 1828: an instrument restored by fortepiano legend Edwin Beunk that clearly facilitates full-tilt virtuosity without the encumbrance of heavy modern piano action. Chopin's F minor Fantasy takes on an intimate tone with a soft if slightly later (1885) Erard, though Melnikov here sounds maybe less comfortable with the music's emotional content. Moving into the 20th century, Busoni is presented on an elderly Bechstein and finally Schnittke on a Steinway.

> The Mendelssohn is performed with a windswept brilliance

Contextualised so strongly and imaginatively, the modern grand emerges simply as the latest development of many – equal yet not superior to its predecessors. While reaching for increased power and brightness, it yields to older models for subtlety, colour and character. Melnikov does justice to them all.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Evolutionary tale: Melnikov takes us on an instrumental journey

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JS Bach

Partitas Nos 1, 5 & 6
Nils Anders Mortensen (piano)
Lawo Classics LWC1249 70:23 mins

Bach's Six Partitas are the weightiest of his three sets of suites for harpsichord. Published in 1731 with the rather dry-sounding title of 'Keyboard exercises' (*Clavier-Übung*) they contain not only some of his most dramatic preludes, but also racier items such as 'Scherzo' and 'Burlesca' (both in Partita No. 3) alongside the standard French dances. A substantial two-manual harpsichord with its range of textures is the ideal instrument for these demanding works, but under the right fingers the modern piano can certainly provide an effective range of contrasts and, when all is said and done, the quality of performance is what counts. In the three Partitas presented here, the result is mixed.

The First Partita in B flat has many of the qualities that make Mortensen's performances at times genuinely attractive, at others a touch ordinary. In the gently welcoming Prelude, the shaping of phrases is graceful and the ornamentation idiomatic without feeling at all artificial. In the broader dances there is always attention to detail, but occasionally a routine approach creeps in during more sequential passages and the paired Minuets are disappointingly featureless.

There are similar frustrations with the other two Partitas. The deliciously whimsical 'Preambulum' of the Fifth Partita has just the right level of improvisatory humour, and the 'Toccata' which opens the final Partita is darkly captivating as are the more substantial dances; and yet the slighter movements are disappointingly routine.

These well-recorded performances are never less than impressive technically, but often they just fail to deliver the complete picture. *Jan Smaczny*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Beethoven

Symphonies, Vol. 3: Nos 2 & 7 (arr. Scharwenka)
Tessa Uys, Ben Schoeman (piano)
SOMM Recordings SOMMCD 0666
79:11 mins

When I was studying music at university, a friend and I would often play piano duets, elbowing each other for room at the keyboard. Many of our scores were transcriptions of orchestral works for piano: it's a great way of getting to know the repertoire. Of course, until the advent of recording, it was the best and pretty much only option for most fans to hear the music they

JOSEP MOLINA, DAVID VENNI

loved at home, so there are plenty of worthwhile arrangements out there to explore.

Beethoven's symphonies have fared particularly well, with Liszt's solo piano transcriptions a high point (though you'll need to be a virtuoso to play them). But, as pianist Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman demonstrate in this hugely enjoyable recording, Scharwenka's versions for piano duo scrub up well too. Scharwenka (1850-1924) was a Polish-German pianist, composer and teacher, whose music has come back into circulation in recent years thanks to the likes of Marc-André Hamelin and Stephen Hough. Uys and Schoeman have already recorded his transcriptions of the mighty 'Eroica' and the famous Fifth.

I was immediately struck by the orchestral quality of their sound, its depth, volume and colour. That's a benefit of having four hands at one piano, rather than two, and surely testament to Scharwenka's skill. It pays off particularly in Symphony No. 2's outer movements, though adds a slightly clodhopping feel to the *Scherzo*. And it's true that their approach is less like a fleet-footed period instrument ensemble and more like a large Romantic orchestra in the 'apotheosis of the dance'. But Symphony No. 7 works well either way, and this is an exhilarating account. *Rebecca Franks*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Debussy

Préludes, Book I; Estampes; Images for Orchestra – Rondes de Printemps (arr. Gasparian)
Jean-Paul Gasparian (piano)
Naïve V7958 64:33 mins

The booklet note begins: 'Although he never pursued a solo career, Debussy was a gifted pianist who impressed his contemporaries with the gentleness and depth of his touch.' Indeed – and while there are many different ways of approaching the piano music, it makes sense to stay at least reasonably close to Debussy's example. For most of this release, that isn't how Jean-Paul Gasparian does it.

He seems to think that he does, to judge from his booklet note interview, where he speaks of his search for 'something evocative and immaterial' suited to 'the range of moods, colours and timbres that make up the Debussyan universe.' But he also mentions that he and his technical team were constantly adjusting microphone positions and the piano itself, and that's a telling clue to how much these interpretations have been over-thought. Throughout the *Préludes* the piano tone is predominantly hard-edged, and the recorded balance gallingly close. The gentle appeal of 'La fille aux cheveux de lin' or the poignancy of 'Des pas sur la neige' are not captured; compensating factors, like the genuine grandeur of 'La Cathédrale engloutie', are rare.

When we reach *Estampes*, 'Pagodes' at last conveys a Debussyan feeling of freedom (and is given a kinder recorded balance), but the rainwashed scene of 'Jardins sous la pluie' is depicted with a drivenness that's almost severe. The transcription by Gasparian's father of the orchestral *Rondes de printemps* brightens the picture a little. This is a real addition to the Debussy keyboard repertoire, and Gasparian delivers its intricate inner part-writing with clarity and skill. *Malcolm Hayes*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★

Tanya Ekanayaka

18 Piano Sutras; 25 South Asian Pianisms
Tanya Ekanayaka (piano)
Naxos World NXW76163-2
133:16 mins (2 discs)

Ekanayaka describes this double-album as 'a slow journey, beginning in my childhood, of seeking, discernment, discovery, renewal, vision, thought, compassion, gratitude, and hope'. What more could she add? Actually a lot. The compositions here, all by her, have been 'inspired by 40 spectacular languages and 42 secular songs... with each song containing lyrics in one of the languages'. Bilingual Dr Ekanayaka is at pains to tell us – in the tone of a kindly New Age therapist – of her desire to create piano music which reflects 'the mind of a South Asian female', and also the 'multilingual multi-cultures and tapestries of my life, peoples and spaces' in this 'indigenisation' of the piano.

Nostalgic selection: pianist Isata Kanneh-Mason goes back to her childhood in her latest recording

Enough? By no means. Each of her 43 little pieces gets a learned liner-note commentary on the endangered language of the place which inspired it, plus a verbal evocation of the mood she wants to establish. Some 'ponder aspects of longing and nostalgia', others 'celebrate the expansiveness of the skies'; the trouble is that many of her evocations are interchangeable. And that is because most of the pieces express the same mood.

We never hear the languages or the folk songs she purports to celebrate – we never get a whiff of local colour – because everything is put through the same musical mangle. This music is unscored, and might as well have been improvised: it depends on a handful of sub-Debussy, sub-Ravel effects – tweaks, twiddles and arpeggiations – whose relentless repetition creates a numbing blandness. *Michael Church*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Ferrabosco

Lessons for 1, 2 & 3 Viols
Richard Boothby (lyra viol), Asako Morikawa (viola da gamba)
Signum Classics SIGCD757 53:54 mins

Alfonso Ferrabosco the Younger is a composer more often heard of than heard, so this album offers a welcome opportunity to encounter some of his lesser-known solo instrumental music. Born in Greenwich in 1575, Ferrabosco was the son of the celebrated Italian musician Alfonso Ferrabosco the Elder. Alfonso junior was left behind under the care of one of Elizabeth I's courtiers when his parents left London for Italy in 1578, never to return.

Although influenced by continental European models, Ferrabosco's music is decidedly English – not least because of his connection with the theatre and with the playwright Ben Johnson in particular, for whom he wrote music for plays and masques. Theatrical elements are central to Richard Boothby's performance of 13 movements from Ferrabosco's 1609 *Lessons for 1, 2 and 3 Viols*. In two of them (tracks 4 and 5) he is joined by Asako Morikawa on viola da gamba. Boothby's instrument is the lyra viol – a small bass viol, greatly prized by contemporaries for its ability to vibrate untouched strings and for its association with the lyre of ancient Greece.

The preludes and dance numbers (allemandes, galliards and pavanes) are played with vigour and stateliness, and with just the right amount of rustic edge. Boothby also brings out the melancholic quality of Ferrabosco's music – a style that was highly fashionable in late-Elizabethan and early-Jacobean England. Similarities between the 'Almaine' on track 7 and John Dowland's 'Flow my tears' are unmistakeable. The recorded sound from St Mary Magdalene Church in Sherborne is clear, if a little dry. *John-Pierre Joyce*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Childhood Tales

Debussy: Children's Corner; **Dohnányi:** Variations on a Nursery Song*; **Mozart:** Variations on 'Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman' in C, K265; **R Schumann:** Kinderszenen

Isata Kaneh-Mason (piano); *Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/ Domingo Hindoyan

Decca 485 4180 58:13 mins

Isata Kanneh-Mason's own prodigious childhood – along with that of her six siblings – is a source of great fascination, detailed by her mother in the 2020 family memoir *House of Music*. While life in suburban Nottingham was not without its challenges, all seem to have rubbed along quite nicely – *Childhood Tales* is a largely uplifting collection of pieces inspired by an idealistic view of early life. At its centre sits Ernő Dohnányi's *Variations on a Nursery Song*, a concertante piece that uses 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' as its theme. Domingo Hindoyan, Kanneh-Mason and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra bring out the humour of this evocative and charming piece, reminding us why the 1914 work was once so popular.

Pairing Dohnányi with Mozart's variations on the same theme makes musical sense: Kanneh-Mason plays beautifully even in the early variations, drawing out the well-known melody in Nos 3 and 4, having fun with the virtuosic Nos 6 and 7 and injecting contrast and drama into Nos 8 and 10. The dreamy, playful images conjured by Debussy's *Children's Corner* are balanced by Schumann's introspective *Kinderszenen*. Kanneh-Mason trots through 'Ritter vom Steckenpferd'; tiptoes along 'Träumerei' and finds just enough pathos in 'Fast zu ernst'. The slowly turning, brooding nostalgia leaves us yearning for uncomplicated innocence. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Plucky explorer: guitarist Zsófia Boros leads us off the beaten track

MARIA FRODL

Pulse

Works by John Adams, Craig Armstrong, Cage, Eastman, Philip Glass, Luke Howard, Jarrett, M Monk, Terry Riley et al

Shani Diluka (piano)

Warner Classics 5419730264 79:44 mins

Mixtapes – homemade compilations, progressing from cassette to CD – are an intimate art form, marking many a blossoming friendship. The format has recently been eclipsed by automated playlists, but technology cannot (yet) replace thoughtful curation. Hence this eclectic collection from Shani Diluka of pieces mainly for solo piano. The music is loosely themed by a reliance on the titular pulse; Philip Glass, Terry Riley and John Adams are there, naturally, alongside Craig Armstrong, Meredith Monk, Daft Punk and others. There's also a piece – *Shimmers* – by Diluka, which twinkles with repetition, fitting well with its album counterparts.

Glass is a touchstone and his works are sprinkled throughout the programme. Diluka's rubato in *Metamorphosis One* is effective, as is the impressionistic touch in the Opening from *Glassworks*. Chineke! Orchestra features on Julius Eastman's *The Holy Presence of Joan d'Arc*, originally intended for multiple cellos and adapted here by Abel Saint Bris. It's a dramatic rendering; Diluka pounds the rhythmic ostinato; the strings scrape theirs. Further adaptation comes with an imaginative version of Glass's Etude No. 5 overlaid with the poem *Paths That Cross* (Patti Smith/ Fred Smith) spoken by the pianist. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Revival

Bonds: Spiritual Suite; **Price:** Piano Sonata in E minor; Fantasie nègre Nos 1, 2 & 4

Michelle Cann (piano)

Curtis Studio (digital only) 63:18 mins

Acclaimed pianist Michelle Cann has long been a champion of African-American composer Florence Price, and this fine new recording brings together two substantial works by Price for solo piano alongside Margaret Bonds's glorious *Spiritual Suite*.

Born in Arkansas in 1887 in the midst of the Jim Crow segregation laws, Florence Price showed early talent at the piano and went on to forge a remarkable path as a composer. Her series of *Fantasie nègre* for solo piano (the first of which was premiered by a young Margaret Bonds), were composed across the 1930s and '40s: they present a new musical genre which fused elements of European classical music with African-American spirituals. Each of the *Fantasie nègre* included here is intricately constructed, and Cann's vivid performances bring out a terrific depth of emotion – among many such fine moments, the final rendition of the spiritual 'Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass' in No. 1 is breathtakingly powerful. Price's Piano Sonata in E minor is every bit as accomplished and Cann's reading is poised yet vital, drawing out the work's vibrant polyrhythms and creating a wonderful sense of line in the luscious slow movement.

The selection is completed by Margaret Bonds's *Spiritual Suite*. Written as a showstopper to close her own solo recitals, the work incorporates gospel, jazz and blues into its often virtuosic score. Only the final movement of the suite was published in Bonds's lifetime so it is gladdening to see the work championed here in a performance from Cann that is as subtle as it is exuberant. *Kate Wakeling*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

El último aliento

Works by Joaquín Alem, Mathias Duplessy, Ginastera, Carlos Moscardini and Quique Sinesi

Zsófia Boros (guitar)

ECM 485 8302 37:20 mins

In her third solo album for ECM, Hungarian guitarist Zsófia Boros continues her exploration of contemporary repertoire off the beaten track. Interweaving miniatures by French composer Mathias Duplessy (b1972) and four Argentinian peers, this quietly emotive mix finds common ground in bittersweet harmonies, plangent melodies and fluid, sometimes sultry, rhythms. The title *El último aliento* is taken from the final piece by Carlos Moscardini (b1959) and roughly translates as 'the last breath'. With understated intensity it neatly summarises the whole, which Boros delivers with improvisatory calm just the right side of repose.

Rippling arpeggios and tremolos abound. While Joaquín Alem (b1975) echoes with tamboura the dark-light spaciousness of Duplessy's opening *De rêve et de pluie*, Alberto Ginastera (1916-83) – the sole non-living composer here – brings pensive nobility in a brief *Milonga*. Of the Frenchman, perhaps most alluring is *Le labyrinthe de Vermeer* with its loping rhythms and suggestive major-minor shifts.

But the highlights come courtesy of unexpected textures in two works by Quique Sinesi (b1960): in *El abrazo*, Boros ingeniously mutes the strings with an elastic band, then later switches to the ten-string Andean ronroco for *Tormenta de ilusión* to striking effect. *Steph Power*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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Jazz

Barry Witherden's selection features music both conventional and experimental

JAZZ CHOICE

Hope in troubled times

Steve Banks's elegant response to a year we would rather forget is straight from the heart

Chronicle of a crisis: Steve Banks's music is honest and heartfelt

Steve Banks

Emboldened

Steve Banks (guitar), Sam Crockett (sax), Rebecca Nash (piano), Henrik Jensen (bass), Mark Whitlam (drums)

Stoney Lane records SLR 1981

Given the abundance of eclectic, exotic and experimental music threaded through this month's selections I may be considered timid in my choice of the relatively conventional *Emboldened* as pick of the month, but I'm happy to justify this decision, both on grounds of performance and composition quality as well as what they signify. Banks was motivated by concern at how 2020 developed: not just the pandemic but also the events that prompted the Black Lives Matter and Me-Too movements, the climate change emergency and the general atmosphere of shock and frustration. The *Emboldened* suite, occupying four of the seven tracks here, is a chronicle of hard-won optimism and hope, unveiled on Holocaust Memorial Day 2021. However, its worthiness, albeit admirable, is only a minor factor in my recommendation of this album. In the end it's the music that matters, and certainly *Emboldened* scores highly on this count. All the compositions are heartfelt and honest, as are the performances, not least by pianist Rebecca Nash whose crisp, elegant work I first heard when she was playing and arranging for the fine singer Sara Colman. ★★★★★

July round-up

View From Above is the debut album from percussionist, session musician and producer ***Tristan Banks***. He's said he wanted to push the acoustic quartet format to its limits. I'm not sure that he's quite done that but it's certainly an arresting session. It was recorded 'as live', which may at least partly account for its impressive sense of immediacy. While coherent well-structured development is never neglected, rugged piano, bass and drums from John Crawford, Davide Mantovani and Banks himself drive ten of Banks's compositions forward with a determination sometimes bordering on ferocity, while Paul Booth's reeds and woodwind ride the waves with aplomb. *(Ubuntu Music UBUO1331CD)* ★★★★★

Another debut comes from MultiTraction Orchestra. ***Reactor One***, like many albums conceived during the Covid lockdowns, was created by linking the participants remotely. The project's leader, ***Alex Roth***, uploaded his guitar tracks for the invited musicians who then recorded their responses without having heard what others had done, other than James Allsopp (reeds) and trumpeter Arve Henriksen, who were sent Roth's initial assemblages. Henriksen's considered phrasing and remarkable tone (he can make the trumpet sound like a soprano sax or an oboe) beautifully suffuse the *Reactor Suite*, which evokes a range of musical genres yet somehow coheres convincingly. *(Superpang SP154)* ★★★★

The riffling ostinato threaded through the opening track of ***To Vanish***, the latest release from ***Trichotomy***, reminds me of some of Steve Reich's classic Minimalist pieces of the 1970s, and these echoes crop up throughout the album. The basic trio is augmented by Danny Widdicombe (pedal steel guitar), Thomas Green (keyboards) and Nicole Tait (bassoon). It's as good as anything they have ever done, not least in the high standard of compositions. It's atmospheric and lyrical, and beautifully recorded and performed. *(Earshift Music Ear070)* ★★★★

I'm not sure how comfortably ***Mirage*** fits into the jazz category, though there are undoubtedly plenty of jazz influences and guest artists from that genre, including pianist Bugge Wesseltoft. Whatever, it's an impressive and thoroughly riveting album by Oslo-based guitarist ***Lilja*** (full name Oddrun Lilja Jonsdottir). Alongside those jazz elements there are guest artists from Brazil, Morocco, South Asia (some great sitar playing by Ashraf Sharif Khan) and Sápmi folk from the Northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and part of north-west Russia. Lilja's distinctive vocals are haunting in all senses of the word. *(Jazzland 3775940)* ★★★★

It's A Matter of Fact was inspired by woodcuts created by Paul Dunmall and Pete Lawrence, working improvisationally and turn by turn. The resulting music is realised by the ***Paul Dunmall Ensemble***, eight masters and mistresses of improv, including legendary vocalist Julie Tippetts. 'Calling the Spirits' opens with a loping, stalking, bluesy ensemble sequence which breaks out into a freer format with solos but still underpinned by the ghost of the material derived from the opening passages. This presages the routine from then on, free playing co-habiting creatively with occasional episodes of almost classic big-band swing in a manner recalling Mike Westbrook's *Release*, and that's high praise in my book. *(Discus 148CD)* ★★★★

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Brief notes

This month's selection includes The Planets, a Passion and a pop-tastic harp

Borodin • Vassallo • Vella
Orchestral Works
Malta Philharmonic Orchestra/Sergey Smbatyan *Navona Records NV6393*

For something new, there's *Malta* and *Rebbieha*, two short orchestral works by Maltese composers Vassallo and Joseph Vella that are respectively sunny and dramatic. The Borodin Second Symphony tends to drag, particularly in the third movement. (JP) ★★★

Bruckner
Symphony No. 4 (1874 version)
Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne/ François-Xavier Roth *Myrios MYR032*

Roth chooses the Fourth's less-performed original version. Missing in action is the famous 'hunting horn' *Scherzo*: its predecessor is less cohesive and exciting. The first movement trades the grandeur of Wand or Böhm for an unexpected impulsiveness. (SW) ★★★★

Grieg • Maier • Röntgen
String Quartets
The Zilliacus Quartet
dbProductions dBCD207

String quartets from three close friends, all rich in melody and quartet interplay. There's a beguiling folkish lilt to the second movement of Grieg's quartet; elsewhere, we are in familiar mid-Romantic territory. Songful chamber music played with warmth and precision. (SW) ★★★★★

Holst The Planets
Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/ Daniel Harding *BR Klassik 900208*

This live recording from February 2022 captures the BRSO's first performance of Holst's astrological epic in over 30 years. It's thrilling stuff, all tightly marshalled by Harding, though at times that control holds back the work's surging energy. But it's a small criticism. (CS) ★★★★

Mendelssohn
String Quartets in E flat major
Consone Quartet *Linn Records CKD716*

The Consone musicians, skilled specialists in period performance, present two Mendelssohn quartets in E flat on gut strings. Yet for all its warmth and delicacy, the muted gut denies the works their sheen and sparkle, as if the lights have been dimmed. (CS) ★★★

Mozart • Widmann
Clarinet Quintets
Hagen Quartett; Jörg Widmann (clarinet) *Myrios MYR031*

The clarinet's cool, refined tones blend with warm, pliable strings to irresistible effect in Mozart's joyful Quintet, K581 and Widmann's substantial, single-movement response – a complex and uneasy composition, given its premiere recording by supremely talented musicians. (CS) ★★★★★

Puccini Messa di Gloria etc
Charles Castronovo (tenor) et al
Harmonia Mundi HMM905367

Oscillating between benign and high-spirited in character, Puccini's 1880 mass comes with moments that would not sound out of place in a Verdi opera. Don't expect to plunge the emotional depths; do enjoy a very likeable, melodious work, performed here with winning panache. (JP) ★★★★

Regamey • Schoenberg
Chamber Works
Nicolas Altstaedt (cello); Ilya Gringolts (violin) et al *Alpha Classics ALPHA948*

The latest in cellist Altstaedt's Lockenhaus Festival series showcases works by Schoenberg and little-known Swiss-Polish composer Constantin Regamey. The Schoenberg is tortured and dramatic, yet cohesive and purposeful – while the virtuosic Regamey has a gripping, rhythmic drive. (CS) ★★★★

Sancan Piano Concerto etc
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (piano); BBC Philharmonic *Chandos CHAN20154*

Reminding one a little of Ravel or even Khachaturian, the 1957 Piano Concerto is the major work on an album devoted to a composer who remains largely unknown in his native France. The other works, including the exquisite Sonatine for Flute and Piano, also reveal what a deft craftsman he was. (JP) ★★★★

Neil Tòmas Smith
Stop Motion Music
Carla Rees (flute), Esther Swift (harp) et al *Dark Inventions DI2301*

The very nature of 'stop motion' is that it takes a lot of time and concentration to get to the end result. The same very much goes for this experience, which is, at its best, meditative (*Stop Motion Music I-IV*). At its worst (*Manual, Scaffold for Simon*), I'm afraid it's just a little bit tedious. (MB) ★★

Correspondances
Works by Enescu, Ravel, C Scott
Cristian Sandrin (piano)
Antarctica AR043

Cristian Sandrin draws convincing parallels between the piano music of Enescu, Ravel and Scott. This is a brave new world, soon after Wagner has stretched the boundaries of tonality and Debussy has opened up new avenues of timbre and touch. (SW) ★★★★

Echoes
Works by JS Bach, Glass et al
Orchestra of the Swan
Signum Cassics SIGCD732

Whether you cherry-pick or listen through, this third 'mixtape' album from the versatile Swans is occasionally transportive. Unusual choices aside – the Finzi finale is a bit of a downer – pieces by Frank Zappa, A Winged Victory for the Sullen and Portishead are highlights. (MB) ★★★

Love & Light Works by Hildegard, James MacMillan et al
iSing Silicon Valley et al *Avie AV2602*

This is impressive. A largely contemporary, contemplative and often complex programme is performed with exceptional poise by the girls' choir and harpist Cheryl Ann Fulton. Sungji Hong's mesmeric *Lux Aeterna* is the pick of several highlights. (JP) ★★★★★

Man Up / Man Down Works by Robert Maggio, David Lang et al
Constellation Men's Ensemble
Sono Luminus DSL-92266

The *a cappella* delivery by this all-male vocal ensemble in its debut recording certainly resonates. The same goes for the messaging, which unpacks dialogues around masculinity. An important topic, though a little less than dynamic, musically. (MB) ★★★

Polish Romantic Symphonies
Works by Mirecki, Wieniawski
Arthur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra *DUX DUX1901*

Franciszek Mirecki's (1791-1862) operatic background informs his symphony's forthright phrasing. There's also plenty of skittering Mendelssohnian energy, making for a satisfying Romantic symphony. Wieniawski is a more familiar name – but this is Józef, Henryk's brother, and this is the less distinguished work. (SW) ★★★

Pop Meets Classical Vol. 1
Works by JS Bach, Nirvana et al
Alexander Boldachev (harp)
Indésens IC001

An album that does what it says on the tin. Some of harpist Alexander Boldachev's arrangements, such as Bach and Daft Punk, work nicely, while the likes of the Scorpions' *Winds of Change* (complete with whistling) take some getting used to. (JP) ★★★

Secret Nights Songs by Beach, Chaminade, Saint-Saëns et al
Sonja Leutwyler (mezzo-soprano) et al
Solo Musica SM385

The violin is the voice's sympathetic echo, while the piano marks the rhythm and pedal points. Chaminade's yearning 'Menuet' and Lili Boulanger's voiceless 'Nocturne' are French art song gems, while Schulhoff's *Three mood pictures* add tangy 20th-century harmonies. (SW) ★★★

Stone, Salt and Sky Works by Maconchy, Sally Beamish et al
Gaia Duo *Delphian DCD34263*

The debut recording from this violin-and-cello duo (Katrina Lee and Alice Allen) features a handful of premiere recordings, including the title work by Sally Beamish. That piece is an evocative highlight: toe-tapping (quite literally) with a beautiful introspection. Gorgeous sound quality and playing throughout. (MB) ★★★★★

Sword in the Soul
Works by Francis Grier, Owain Park, David Bednall, Elgar
London Choral Sinfonia/Michael Waldron et al *Orchid Classics ORC100223*

There's an uncompromising intimacy to Francis Grier's title work, a musical Passion play with top-class narration from well-known actors Simon Callow and Samantha Bond. Additional choral items by Elgar, Finzi, David Bednall and Owain Park are replete with riches; very beautifully done. (MB) ★★★★

Works for Cello and Piano
Works by Rachmaninov et al
Reiner Ginzel (violoncello), Gitti Pirner (piano) *Hänssler Classic HC23009*

There is much to enjoy on this congenial album of 19th-century works, but with recorded blend weighted towards the cello, there's a lack of pianistic coolness to balance out Reiner Ginzel's generous vibrato. The cello also lacks true elegance where required. (CS) ★★★

Reviewers: *Michael Beek* ***(MB),*** *Jeremy Pound* ***(JP),*** *Charlotte Smith* ***(CS),*** *Steve Wright* ***(SW)***

The month in box-sets

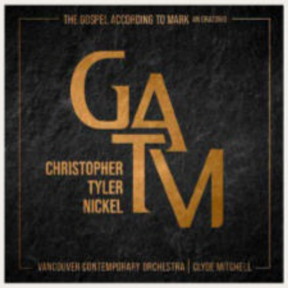
Compelling feast: Decca's new Herbert Blomstedt collection includes everything from Beethoven to Hindemith

GETTY

One epic gospel and some Jewish roots

Our July round-up also features Herbert Blomstedt and Alfred Cortot

Christopher Tyler Nickel's ***The Gospel According to Mark*** *(Avie AV2562)* isn't a box-set collection, but an epic single work spread across seven discs. The Canadian composer has set the entire English text of the gospel from the King James Bible, with the Vancouver Contemporary Orchestra providing robust support to storyteller-singers Catherine Redding, Fabiana Katz, Carman J Price and Steven Bélanger. Seven hours is a lot, so breaks are advised. You have to admire his vision, though, and the performances are compelling.



You have to admire Christopher Tyler Nickel's vision

Even more compelling is ***Herbert Blomstedt – The Complete Decca Recordings*** *(Decca 485 3281)*, which captures the Swedish conductor's acclaimed recordings for the label across 33 discs. His years at the helm of both the San Francisco Symphony and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestras are accounted for in glittering takes, including his thrilling Sibelius symphony cycle with the American ensemble. There's so much more, though, with everything from Beethoven to Hindemith, not to mention original jacket artwork and a thorough 76-page book.

Though his 1940s wartime allegiances might have been questionable, there was no doubting the musical prowess and influence of the French pianist Alfred Cortot. ***The Warner Classics Edition*** *(Warner Classics 5419747194)* is a 40-disc collection of recordings spanning a huge range of repertoire from Couperin to Chopin. Indeed the latter was a particular focus for Cortot and his music dominates the selection, recorded as early as 1926. These 2012 remasters sound top notch too.

From Jewish Life *(SWR Music SWR19434CD)* is a fascinating five-disc collection that shines light on a short-lived movement in early 20th-century Russia to bring about a Jewish classical music idiom. It was Rimsky-Korsakov who challenged his Jewish students to seek out their musical traditions and combine them with western classical music, and much of that work – alongside other examples – is gathered here in recordings made 1999-2004. Fine performances, too, from the likes of Tabea Zimmermann, Jascha Nemtsov and Wolfgang Meyer.

Books

Our critics cast their eyes over the latest selection of books on all things music

Composing Myself
Andrzej Panufnik
Toccata Press 300pp (pb) £60

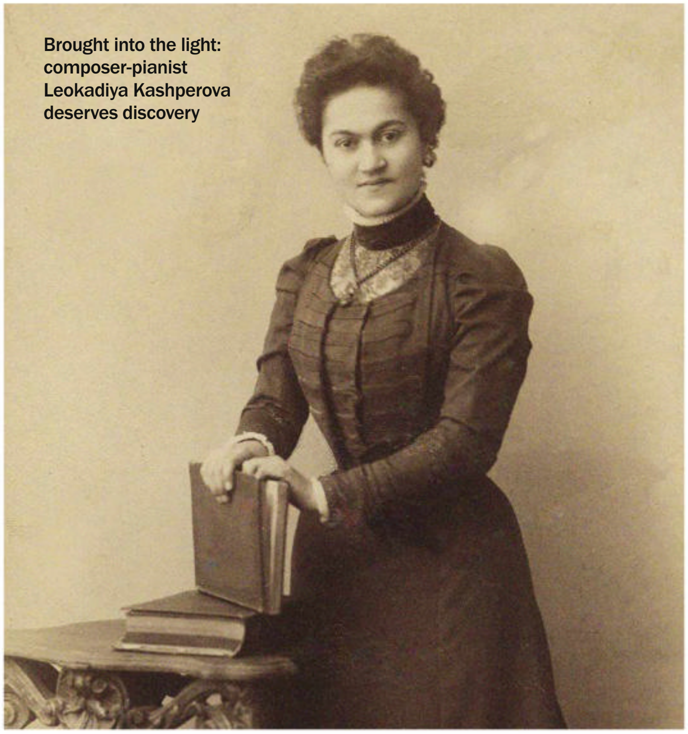
The lively and engaging memoirs of the Polish-born, British-domiciled composer Andrzej Panufnik

(1914-91) have long been out of print. So their reappearance under the Toccata Press imprint is welcome, more especially as this handsomely produced book is the first of two projected volumes, with a second devoted to articles and programme notes from the Panufnik archive due to follow. The new edition features copious (and rare) illustrations plus detailed footnotes, augmenting the sometimes broad-brush impressions left by an author who protested he was not a man of words and addressing details such as those (queried by the musicologist Adrian Thomas) of his dramatic defection from communist Poland.

Originally published in 1987, the book is also brought up to date with a final chapter by the composer's widow Camilla Panufnik, completing the story of his last few years. His 75th birthday celebrations are included, plus the composition of the Tenth Symphony and Cello Concerto (for Mstislav Rostropovich), the latter written in a race against developing cancer. The story of his emotional return to Warsaw in 1990, after a 36-year absence, brings Panufnik's life full circle. *John Allison* ★★★★

Leokadiya Kashperova (Cambridge Elements – Women in Music)
Graham Griffiths
Cambridge 82pp (pb) £17

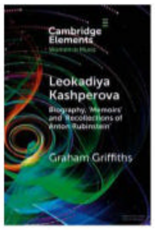
Once remembered as the young Stravinsky's principal piano teacher, Leokadiya Kashperova was pre-Revolutionary Russia's sole major female composer, admired by Rimsky-Korsakov and Balakirev. Her career and life's work, effectively buried after the Revolution, have been partially recovered by British scholar Graham Griffiths – enough



Brought into the light: composer-pianist Leokadiya Kashperova deserves discovery

GETTY

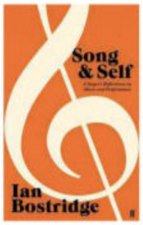
to secure the launch last year of a new edition of Kashperova's music by Boosey & Hawkes, and a Radio 3 Composer of the Week. Griffiths has published elsewhere on this remarkable pianist-composer, but now offers more in this deceptively slim volume – deceptive, as its richest treasure is offered not within its covers but as an online appendix:



Kashperova was one of Anton Rubinstein's last and most highly regarded pupils, and her memoir of her former teacher, translated into English for the first time (by Roger Cockrell) and published there, includes a highly detailed recollection of Rubinstein's playing of specific works by Schubert and Beethoven – virtually a masterclass in itself. Alas, since completing the book in early 2022, Griffiths's hopes for further research and recovery of Kashperova's life and career have almost literally gone up in smoke. *Daniel Jaffé* ★★★★

Song & Self
Ian Bostridge
Faber 128pp (hb) £14.99

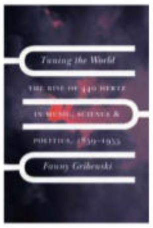
Tenor Ian Bostridge's deep dive into musical identity and what he calls 'hidden histories' may be a slender volume, but it's a dense read – the words 'mystagogical' and 'phenomenologically' inhabit the same sentence; Monteverdi's *Combattimento* 'challenges the tropes of heteronormativity'; while Ravel's *Chansons madécasses* disclose 'a story of power relations, violence, and European attitudes to the perceived "other"'. Bostridge



de-coupled himself from academia some three decades ago but at times these lectures (fruits of the pandemic delivered at the University of Chicago in 2021) read like an application for re-admittance. Don't be put off, though. Beyond the scattered thickets of university-speak lie rolling vistas of telling aperçus, insights born out of the enriching experiences of an inquisitive performer, not to mention vivid phrase-making. Monteverdi through to Britten via Schumann's problematic *Frauenliebe und -leben*, Bostridge probes works that have exercised a particular resonance on him. The final lecture examining the omnipresence of death across much of Britten's output is particularly illuminating (especially in relation to John Donne); and following a lucid potted disquisition on French colonialism Ravel's *Chansons madécasses* divulge a fascinating backstory. *Paul Riley* ★★★★

Tuning the World
Fanny Gribenski
Chicago 280pp (hb) £44

When the oboist plays an A for the orchestra to tune to, the chances are that note is set to 440 Hz. This uniformity is a recent phenomenon, as Fanny Gribenski – assistant professor of music at New York University – explains in *Tuning the World*. During the 19th century, there were concerns that pitch was gradually changing upwards, and would, in time, corrupt the classics and cause problems for singers. But, as Gribenski explains in



granular detail, standardising tuning was not straightforward. When, for example, France responded to the problem by fixing A at 435 Hz (a measure known as the *diapason normal*), new woodwind and brass instruments were required. Eventually, in 1939, an international consortium agreed that A = 440 Hz would be the global norm, with the BBC launching the explainer series 'Can We Have An A' in 1947. Gribenski presents a detailed, albeit dour, account of this under-explored topic. I would have liked more about the conspiracy theories that claim Goebbels enforced the use of 440 Hz as it increases anxiety – a proposition far too silly for this rigorously researched book. *Claire Jackson* ★★★★

Our expert *Chris Haslam* gives valuable advice on buying and using your hi-fi

Your buyer's guide to the best In Ear Monitors

We recommend...

Value and quality: Sennheiser IE200

Sennheiser IE200 £130

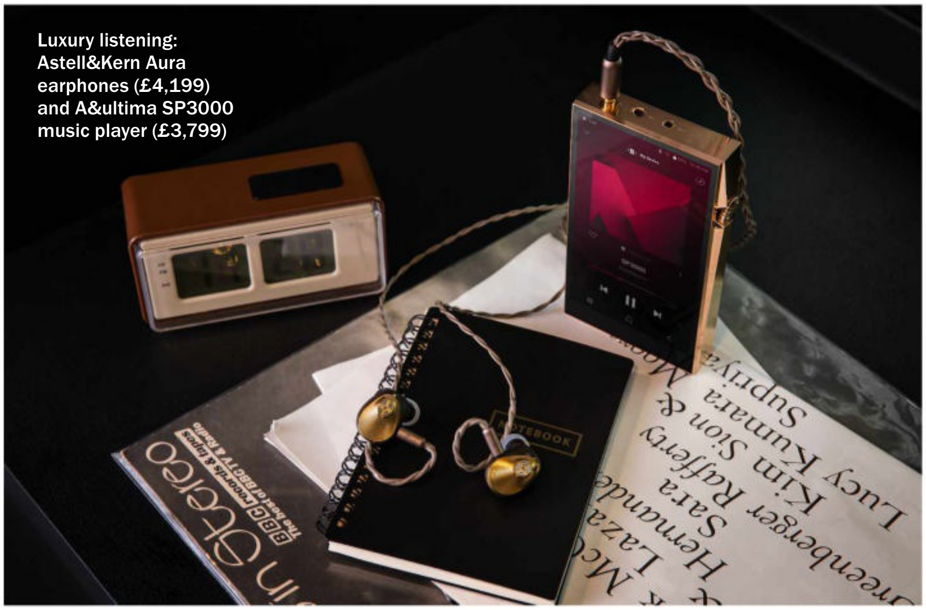
Excellent value earbuds that sound significantly better than any wireless options at this price. They lack bells and whistles, but are light (4g each), comfortable and well made, and the 7mm TrueResponse drivers produce a sumptuous clarity. **sennheiser.com**

Campfire Audio Andromeda Emerald Green £1,449

These statement headphones feature five balanced armature drivers in 3D-printed housing, surrounded by a flawless aluminium shell. Easy to drive, they come with silver-plated copper MMCX cables and engulf the listener in an incredible level of detail. **campfireaudio.com**

FiiO FH7S £369

This hybrid design has a large 13.6mm dynamic driver and semi-open design that reduces pressure on your eardrums, while also delivering a smooth performance and expansive soundstage. It also comes with three screw-in filters that can be used to tweak the sound profile. **fiio.com, Amazon.co.uk**



Luxury listening: Astell&Kern Aura earphones (£4,199) and A&ultima SP3000 music player (£3,799)

The number of different earphones available today is mind boggling, and although wireless active noise cancelling designs steal the headlines, if you're looking for the very best in pocketable quality, In Ear Monitors (IEMs) could be just the ticket.

Traditionally favoured by musicians and audio engineers, IEMs are also popular with on-the-go audiophiles, who appreciate the adjustable ear-hook fit and noise isolation. Because they sit on your ear concha with the tip covering the entire ear canal, they offer supreme isolation, comfort and immersive listening.

> In Ear Monitors offer the very best in pocketable audio quality

Most IEMs are wired, so you will need a compatible smartphone, hi-res audio player or DAC (Digital to Analogue Converter) to really benefit, but that also means you get the best possible audio quality from your music. Some Bluetooth adapters that add wireless versatility to classic monitors are starting to become available – try the new **iFi Go Pod** – but for most, the performance boost will outweigh the inconvenience of a cable.

While major brands such as Sennheiser sell excellent designs, there are a host of niche companies including Dunu, FiiO, iKKO, Campfire Audio, Jomo and UM Unique Melody all specialising in miniature drivers and epic levels of detail. Good IEMs aren't cheap – budget at least £200-£500 to really hear the difference – but for just £119 the **Shure SE215 (shure.com)** is a considerable upgrade to a pair of standard earbuds.

One feature of high-quality IEMs is the number of drivers they manage to squeeze inside the tiny casings. More drivers typically ensure a broader range of frequencies – my favourite indulgence, the **Campfire Audio Ara (£1,299; campfireaudio.com)** has seven drivers. It's also possible to shop around for a sound profile that suits your ears. If you want warm and bass-rich, neutral or treble-heavy, you'll be able to find a suitable match.

Because there are no batteries or codecs to consider, obsolescence is less of an issue too. Many brands offer spare components, multiple ear tip options and cable choices, with the ability to upgrade and repair. Look out for designs featuring MMCX connectors, which can be swapped out when you need a change.

Custom mouldings are also popular – especially with musicians – and while these can be expensive, UK-based **Snugs.com** offers a more affordable option, and once you've had your ears mapped you can buy perfectly formed eartips to fit almost any in-ear headphone.

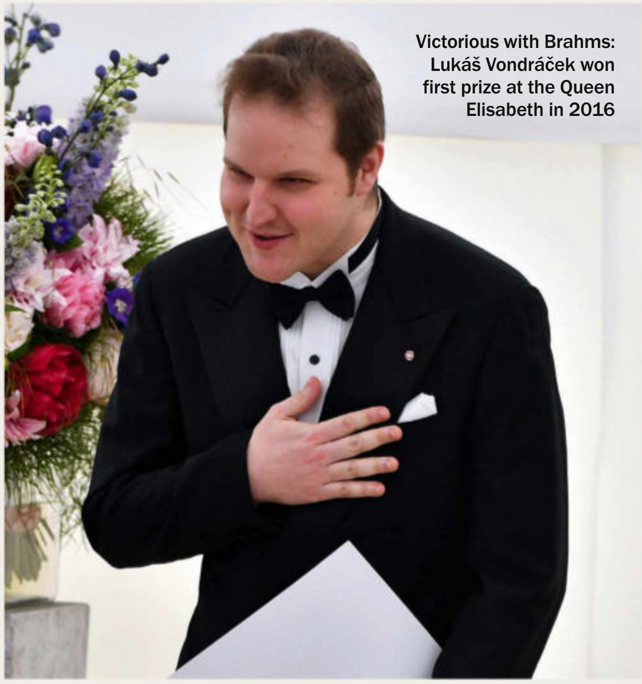
From the archives

Martin Cotton takes in this month's selection of reissued and archival recordings

ARCHIVE CHOICE

Triumphant pianists

A golden snapshot of winning performances from the Queen Elisabeth Competition



Victorious with Brahms: Lukáš Vondráček won first prize at the Queen Elisabeth in 2016

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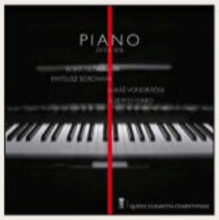


Piano – 2013 & 2016

Works by Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Ravel, Rachmaninov and Liszt
Boris Giltburg, Mateusz Borowiak, Lukáš Vondráček, Alberto Ferro (piano) et al
Queen Elisabeth Competition QEC-DUO 21
273:36 mins (4 discs)

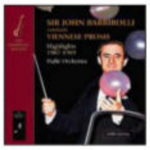
You can see video of these winners on the Queen Elisabeth Compeition's own website, but this compilation of highlights comes with better sound. Giltburg was first-prize winner in 2013, and his Mozart Concerto K450 is classically poised and elegant, in contrast to Beethoven's Op. 90, romantic and flexible; and the Liszt Sonata, emotional but never hectoring. Borowiak won the audience prize that year, and again there's contrast between a pianistic, imaginatively ornamented Bach C minor Partita, a lithe Mozart Concerto K271, and the restrained virtuosity of Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*. In 2016, Vondráček was the victor, and he's a big player, as heard in Brahms's Third Sonata, and Rachmaninov's Third Concerto. Not that he can't summon delicacy when its needed: the quieter moments of the Concerto are exquisitely painted. Audience-prize winner Ferro also played Rachmaninov – the *Corelli Variations* – Mozart's Concerto K467, and an exciting Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody*. The four pianists give their all, despite a few rough edges. ★★★★

July round-up

Thomas Beecham recorded little Richard Strauss, despite their long musical relationship, so it's good to

have his live 1955 performances of *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Juan*. The RPO is on top form, although Beechamesque elegance is sometimes tempered by hard-driven tempos: in the less-often-heard *Macbeth*, a year later, his dramatic approach is better suited to the febrile character of the music. More familiar are the numbers from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, with outstanding solo work from Alan Civil and Philip Jones in the brass. And despite a few mishaps, the Dance of the Seven Veils reaches a tumultuous erotic climax. *(SOMM ARIADNE 5021)* ★★★★

Viennese Night with the Hallé and ***John Barbirolli*** was a regular Proms feature in the 1950s and 1960s. There was usually a classical symphony before the lighter fare – in 1969 it was Haydn's 'Hen' – after that, it's mostly Johann Strauss II, with the *Fledermaus* Overture and two other pieces in alternate versions from different seasons. Barbirolli gives the waltzes a real Wiener Schwung, even if his rubato sometimes catches his



players out. The polkas add to the fun, with more serious fare in Richard Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* Suite, all greeted rapturously by the Prommers. *(Barbirollli Society SJB 1110-11)* ★★★★

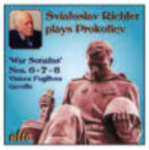
During her lifetime, ***Jessye Norman***'s fastidious standards led her to suppress some of her recordings, but ***The Unreleased Masters*** liberates three disc's-worth. Excerpts from *Tristan und Isolde* conducted by Masur come from sessions which were reportedly not entirely happy, and you can sometimes hear soloist and conductor pulling in different directions. The 'Love Duet' (with Thomas Moser) and the 'Liebestod' are surprisingly uninvolved; in the concert recordings of the *Wesendonck Lieder* and Strauss's

Four Last Songs under Levine there's much greater intensity. And, live with Ozawa, Haydn's *Scena di Berenice*, Berlioz's *Cléopâtre* and Brittten's *Phaedra* have a sense of drama and theatre. *(Decca 485 2984)* ★★★★

In 2006 ***Alexandre Tharaud*** didn't try to emulate the sound of the harpsichord in his selection of pieces by François Couperin, and used the capabilities of a modern Steinway to colour the texture with varied articulation, dynamics and accentuation. He's not afraid of using rubato and pedal, especially in the slower pieces: *Les Ombres errantes* and *Les Jumelles* are especially fetching. Ornaments are

effortlessly neat, and multitracking allows him to realise *Le Carillon de Cythère* (for five hands). The more playful numbers are incisive and witty, and the addition of a drum in *Bruit de Guerre* may not be authentic, but is very striking. *(Harmonia Mundi HMM931956)* ★★★★★

If it's authenticity you're after, ***Sviatoslav Richter plays Prokofiev*** is right up there. From his many recordings of the three so-called 'Wartime' sonatas, here are versions from 1956-61. No. 6 comes from a public concert, with a few splashy moments before things settle, but the contrast between the strident,



the wryly humorous and the sentimental is vividly painted. Richter gave the premiere of No. 7 and he absolutely owns the piece, from the anxiety of the first movement, through the glowing andante to the precipitous finale. The recording leaps into warmer stereo for No. 8, allowing the detail of Richter's amazing pianism to emerge even more strongly. *(Alto ALC 1459)* ★★★★

Unboxed

Andrew McGregor lifts the lid on Erato's new complete set of recordings from conductor John Eliot Gardiner

'For me, it is simply a question of moving ever towards a truth, a freshness of interpretation.' It's been an extraordinary career on record, and when John Eliot Gardiner's complete Archiv and DG recordings were released in a glamorous box a couple of years ago, you'd be forgiven for thinking that his 80th birthday had come early for collectors. But it's not the full story – far from it – as this new set of Gardiner's ***Complete Erato Recordings*** reminds us (*Erato 5054197205514; 64 CDs*).

This is the early John Eliot Gardiner, after his studies with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, presented in chronological order. First there's Purcell's *Music for Queen Mary* in 1976, then Handel and Rameau with the Monteverdi Choir and modern instruments, plus soloists you wouldn't expect today: Felicity Lott, Margaret Marshall and Thomas Allen. Gardiner founded the English Baroque Soloists for period instrument performances, and their Purcell recordings are threaded throughout the set, from *The Indian Queen* in 1979, *King Arthur*, *Timon of Athens* and *Dioclesian*, to the last recording in 1995 for Tony Palmer's film *England, My England*. Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* still sounds wonderfully alive, and Bach Motets in 1980 already reveal the curiosity, passion and authority that would flower more fully in later Bach recordings.

There's plenty of French repertoire, from the Rameau Gardiner discovered in Paris to Gluck with the orchestra he founded at l'Opéra de Lyon – don't miss Anne Sofie von Otter and Barbara Hendricks as Orpheus and Eurydice, Offenbach's comedy *Les Brigands*, Messager's *Fortunio* and Chabrier's *L'Étoile*. Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ* is here complete, superbly cast, and there are enjoyable surprises: Schubert Symphonies and Bizet in Lyon, Ravel and Duparc with Hendricks, and Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and cellist Steven Isserlis.

Even if you have the big DG box, you need this too. Still missing? The *Bach Pilgrimage* and subsequent recordings on Gardiner's own label SDG. And then there's those thrilling Berlioz recordings for Philips, ripe for reissue as a set, without which no Gardner discography can be complete.

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

Andrew McGregor is the presenter of Radio 3's *Record Review*, broadcast each Saturday morning from 9am until 11.45am

Reviews Index

Bacewicz
Concerto for Two Pianos 73
Music for Strings, Trumpets and Percussion 73
Overture 73
Piano Concerto 73
CPE Bach Violin Sonatas etc 82
JS Bach Cantatas etc 78
Partitas Nos 1, 5 & 6 86
Bartók Concerto for Orchestra 70
Four Orchestral Pieces 70
Beethoven
Piano Concertos Nos 3 & 4 73
Symphonies Nos 2 & 7 (trans. duo) 86
Violin Sonatas Nos 2, 4 & 9 82
Borodin Symphony No. 2 92
Bruch Scottish Fantasy 73
Violin Concerto No. 1 74
Bruckner Symphony No. 4 92
Debussy Estampes 87
Images for Orchestra – Rondes de Printemps 87
Préludes, Book I 87
Tanya Ekanayaka
18 Piano Sutras 87
25 South Asian Pianisms 87
Farrenc Overtures Nos 1 & 2 71
Symphonies Nos 1-3 71
Ferrabosco Music for lyra viol 87
Franck
Piano Quintet 82
Piano Trio No. 1 in F sharp minor 82
Violin Sonata in A major 82
Górecki Church Songs, Op. 84 78
Haydn Symphonies Nos 101 & 103 71
Holst The Planets 92
Liszt Orchestral Songs 79
Maconchy Songs 79
A Mahler Complete Songs 79
G Mahler Symphony No. 9 68
Marais Ariane et Bacchus 76
Mendelssohn
String Quartets in E flat major 92
Mercadante Il Proscritto 76
Mozart Clarinet Quintet 92
Symphonies Nos 39-41 71
Nielsen Symphony No. 4 74
Violin Concerto 74
Ailís Ní Ríain
The Last Time I Died 83
Revelling/Reckoning etc 83
Price Adoration 74
Violin Concertos Nos 1 & 2 74
Prokofiev Piano Works 96
Puccini Messa di Gloria etc 92
Rachmaninov
Piano Concerto No. 3 74
Youth Symphony 74
Ravel Pavane pour une infante défunte (arr. trio) 83
Piano Trio in A minor 83
Le Tombeau de Couperin (arr. trio) 83
Regamey String Quartet 92
Steve Reich
Music for 18 Musicians 71
Sancan Piano Concerto etc 92
Schoenberg String Trio 92
Roberto Sierra Orchestral Works 72
Valentin Silvestrov
The Messenger 74
Neil Tòmas Smith
Stop Motion Music 92
Spontini La vestale 76
Szymanowski
Works for Violin and Piano 83
Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto 73
Vassallo Malta 92
Vaughan Williams Songs 79
Vella Rebbieha 92
Vierne Piano Quintet 82
Vivaldi Serenata a tre 77
Wagner Tristan und Isolde (arr. Henk de Vlieger) 70
Weber
Clarinet Concertos Nos 1 & 2 75
Der Freischütz – 'Leise, leise, fromme Weise' 75
Variations on a theme from Silvana (arr. Schottstädt) 75
Widmann Clarinet Quintet 92

COLLECTIONS
An Englishman Abroad
La Serenissima 72
Armenian Cello Concertos
Alexander Chaushian et al 75
Ave Maria Joseph Calleja 80
Beecham Conducts R Strauss
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 96
Beethoven and Beyond
María Dueñas et al 75
Broken Branches
Karim Sulayman, Sean Shibe 80
Childhood Tales
Isata Kanneh-Mason 88
Contra-Tenor Michael Spyres 77
Correspondances
Cristian Sandrin 92
La Cremona
Berliner Barock Solisten 75
Divine Music
Iestyn Davies, Joseph Middleton 80
Echoes Orchestra of the Swan 92
Fantasie Alexander Melnikov 86
Grieg • Maier • Röntgen
The Zilliacus Quartet 92
Jurowski Conducts Stravinsky, Vol. 2 London Philharmonic 72
Love and Light
iSing Silicon Valley 92
Man Up/Man Down
Constellation Men's Ensemble 92
Monologues
Anna Bonitatibus, Adele d'Aronzo 77
My Soul, What Fear You?
Christopher Purves et al 78
Piano 2013 & 2016
Various Artists 96
Polish Romantic Symphonies
Arthur Rubinstein Philharmonic 92
Pop Meets Classical, Vol. 1
Alexander Boldachev 92
Portraits of a Mind
Alessandro Fisher et al 81
Pulse Shani Diluka 88
Revival Michelle Cann 88
Secret Nights Sonja Leutwyler 93
Shadow Dances
Adam Walker, Huw Watkins 84
Sonate a quattro
Ensemble Diderot 84
Spirits Daniel Lozakovich, Stanislav Soloviev 84
Stone, Salt and Sky Gaia Duo 93
Sword in the Soul Various Artists 93
Tic Toc Choc Alexandre Tharaud 96
El Ultimo Aliento Zsófia Boros 88
Unreleased Masters
Jessye Norman 96
Viennese Proms Hallé Orchestra 96
Le Voyage
Alexandra Lowe, Patrick Milne 81
Works for Cello and Piano
Reiner Ginzel, Gitti Pirner 93

Live choice

Paul Riley picks the month's best concert and opera highlights in the UK

Prophetic pianist: Ralph van Raat plays John Luther Adams in Manchester

Glyndebourne Festival Opera
Lewes, Sussex, 1 July – 22 August
Web: *glyndebourne.com*
Set in an Arthur Rackham-inspired fantasyscape, Peter Hall's veteran production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* wears its years lightly. Dalia Stasevska conducts the latest incarnation in a Glyndebourn season that boasts two other 20th-century classics: Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* and Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*.

Scottish Chamber Orchestra
Holy Trinity, St Andrews, 2 July
Web: *eastneukfestival.com*
Holy Trinity's imposing organ sounds a grandiloquent flourish as Tom Wilkinson weaves JS Bach's Fantasia and Fugue BWV 542 and Philip Glass's *Mad Rush* into a programme that concludes with Glass's *American Seasons*. Violinist Isabelle Van Keulen (see p22) directs, and pairs Arvo Pärt's *Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten* with Britten's string orchestral homage to his teacher Frank Bridge.

Claire Booth & Friends
Pier Pavilion, Penarth, 7 July
penarthchambermusicfestival.org.uk
Soprano Claire Booth indulges in a spot of end-of-pier moonbathing as she spearheads Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*. It's prefaced by Debussy's *Pierrot*-inflected Cello Sonata, and to finish there's Schubert's darkly driven 'Death and the Maiden' Quartet.

BBC Philharmonic
Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, 7 July
Web: *factoryinternational.org*
Three world premieres pondering the natural word underpin the orchestra's contribution to the Manchester International Festival. Pianist Ralph Van Raat is the soloist in John Luther Adams's Arctic-inspired *Prophecies of Stone*, which sits alongside works by Alissa Firsova and Ailís Ní Ríain. Vimbayi Kaziboni conducts.

Maxwell Quartet
Shoreditch Church, London, 7 July
Web: *spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk*
Scottish song meets nods to jazz and blues in the English premiere of James MacMillan's piano quintet *We Are Collective*. The pianist is Alasdair Beatson, who also obliges for Franck's Quintet. In between, the Maxwells unleash Scottish folk arrangements and Eleanor Alberga's Quartet No. 2.

The City Music
Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, York, 7 July
Web: *ncem.co.uk*
As part of York's flagship festival revelling in 'Smoke and Mirrors', The City Musick convenes a 20-piece medieval big band to salute the memory of the irrepressible David Munrow, founder of the Early Music Consort of London. From racketts to hurdy-gurdy, the dance collections of Arbeau, Susato and Praetorius are exuberantly plundered.

A Day in Paris
St Leonard's, Hythe, 8 July
Web: *jamconcert.org*
JAM on the Marsh proposes an away day to the French capital. Organist Tom Bell's morning recital is devoted to Messiaen; afternoon brings Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, Milhaud and Paul Mealor, performed by pianists John Frederick Hudson and Cyrill Ibrahim; conductor Nicholas Cleobury, meanwhile, directs an evening dedicated to Debussy, Poulenc and Berlioz.

WCM International Piano Festival
Ulster University, Derry-Londonderry, 10-17 July
Web: *walledcitymusic.com*
Under its founder, Derry-born, US-based pianist Cathal Breslin, the International Piano Festival returns for a fourth iteration embracing talks, classes and concerts drawing on faculty members spanning Europe, Asia and the US.

Kreutzer Quartet
Guildhall, Sandwich, 11 July
Web: *dealmusicandarts.com*
The 80th birthday of composer David Matthews is remembered across this year's Deal Festival, including orchestral music from the Resonate Chamber Orchestra. To the Kreutzer Quartet falls an all-Matthews programme that leavens his Quartets Nos 8 & 14 with his arrangements of Mozart and Beethoven.

Mixtape
DEYA Brewery Taproom, Cheltenham, 12 July
Web: *cheltenhamfestivals.com*
Cheltenham Festival's exuberantly informal 'Mixtape' has taken root – this year swapping Tewkesbury Abbey for a taproom! Among the artists aspiring to shake things up are the Carice Singers and, ahead of a concert combining Caroline Shaw with Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*, the trailblazing Manchester Collective.

Maxim Lando
St Paul's Church, Sketty, 14 July
Web: *gowerfestival.org*
The young American pianist brings the Gower Festival to a

HEATHER PINKHAM

flamboyant close with a recital heavily indebted to his roots. The premiere of a work by Lowell Liebermann is flanked by ragtime, Sondheim and Florence Price. But Liszt is also in the frame, as Mozart's *Don Giovanni* stalks the *Réminiscences de Don Juan*.

I Fagiolini
Holy Cross Church, Ramsbury, 15 July
musicincountrychurches.org.uk
Music in Country Churches' summer series resumes, celebrating rural gems from Devon to Norfolk. In Wiltshire, Robert Hollingworth's vocal consort wraps Monteverdi, Purcell, Dlamini and Cathy Berberian around Britten's *Sacred and Profane*.

Anthony Marwood & James Crabb
Champs Hill, Sussex, 15 July
Web: *petworthfestival.org.uk*
Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* arranged for violin and accordion? If anyone can pull it off, it's the Marwood-Crabb duo. Piazzolla provides the bookends to a sequence that includes Korngold's *Much Ado About Nothing* Suite and the Lament from Sally Beamish's double concerto, *Seavaigers*. (See 'Backstage with…', right).

Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective
St John's Church, Buxton, 19, 20 July
Web: *buxtonfestival.co.uk*
Le Tricolore flutters over the first of the Collective's Buxton appearances. Salon pieces by Lili Boulanger, Debussy, Ravel and Saint-Saëns preface the F sharp minor Piano Quintet of Reynaldo Hahn. Elgar's Piano Quintet caps the nexy day's English programme, plus works by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Rebecca Clarke.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
St Nicholas' Chapel, King's Lynn, 22 July
Web: *kingslynnfestival.org.uk*
The ensemble fields concertos by Vivaldi, Bach, Corelli and Handel, plus Telemann's *Don Quixote* Suite as the centrepiece of an Early Music Day that concludes with late-night Bach, Byrd and Abel from viola da gamba player Ibrahim Aziz and harpsichordist Masumi Yamamoto.

Opera Holland Park
London, 22 July – 4 August
Web: *operahollandpark.com*
Science geek Itchingham Lofte is on a quest to track down all the elements of the periodic table, but where will it lead? Based on the novels by Simon Mayo, Jonathan Dove's opera *Itch* receives its world premiere. A collaboration with long-term librettist Alasdair Middleton, it's conducted by Jessica Cottis.

Dudok Quartet
St Gregory's Minster, Kirkdale, 22 July
Web: *ryedalefestival.com*
Rounding off a Ryedale residency surveying the complete Tchaikovsky string quartets, the Dudoks let their hair down with a candle-lit concert that remixes Rameau, Gabrieli and Palestrina, takes a dive into Miles Davis and John Coltrane, and champions Joey Roukens's Quartet No. 4 'What Remains'.

Guy Johnston & Melvyn Tan
Paxton House, Berwick-upon-Tweed, 25, 26 July
Web: *musicatpaxton.co.uk*
Beethoven's cello sonatas afford a route map through his development as a composer. All five are performed at a single sitting that saves the ebullient A major Op. 69 for last. The following evening, Melvyn Tan adds the last three piano sonatas to Paxton's Beethovenian bounty.

Corbridge Chamber Music Festival
St Andrew's Church, Corbridge, 27-30 July
Web: *corbridgefestival.co.uk*
Anchored by the Gould Piano Trio and clarinettist Robert Plane, the festival casts its net wide across seven adroitly plotted concerts. Classics such as Schubert's String Quintet are leavened with less familiar fare including Marschner's Op. 29 Piano Trio. Plus, contemporary music corrals Oliver Knussen, Anna Meredith and the premiere of a new work by Sarah Jenkins.

Brook Street Band
Dartington Hall, Totnes, 31 July
Web: *dartington.org*
Early music fuels the first week of concerts as Dartington Summer School notches up its 75th edition. Joining the likes of the Dunedin Consort, Fretwork and violinist Rachel Podger, the Brook Street Band is on the trail of paintings by Hogarth and Gainsborough. Each poses a musical conundrum, elucidated by the Band in works by Geminiani, Corelli and Handel.

BACKSTAGE WITH…
James Crabb Accordionist

Careful arrangement: 'I am always looking for ways to bring something new to a score'

Anthony Marwood and you are performing Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* at the Petworth Festival. What makes it a suitable work for arrangement for violin and accordion?
There is already the version for piano and violin, which I took as my template. There is, though, a lot of colouring in the accordion which responds to the wind instruments and so on and which a piano can't replicate – it's that colouring that makes this arrangement so interesting. It is also such an intimate work, which is something the violin and accordion can express. Whenever we do a transcription like this, I am always looking for ways to bring something new and interesting to the score, and we don't just do them because they happen to be popular works. Plus it works well within the programme as a whole, which is like going out to dinner – you want a nice starter and dessert and a satisfying main course in between. I think we've captured that here.

Tell us a little about Sally Beamish's *Seavaigers*…
This is a concerto that was originally written for two folk musicians – violinist Chris Stout and harpist Catriona McKay – plus string ensemble. I replaced the harp part with the accordion, while Sally enhanced the violin part for Anthony, just to add a little bit more of a challenge! It partly tells the story of the Highland Clearances of the 18th century, when people were moved off their land and went into fishing, but often had no idea about sailing. The concerto's Lament is for those lost at sea trying to earn a living.

You begin and end with works by Piazzolla. Were these originally written for the bandoneon rather than the accordion?
They were, yes. The accordion is probably the closest instrument to the bandoneon, plus the largest accordions can have up to four voices playing on each note, which gives a really rich colour that can relate to the bandoneon too. Of course, it's not a bandoneon, but playing Piazzolla on an accordion is all about being respectful to the style of the music, just as when you play, say, JS Bach on the guitar or the piano.

How long have you and Anthony been playing together?
Anthony and I have known each other for about 15-or-so years. We did the occasional performance together here and there and really enjoyed it, so said, 'Why not give it a go as a duo?' It's quite unusual, but we really like making music together and when you have that sort of chemistry you want to do more. We are always keen to surprise the audience with music they might not expect!

TV&Radio

Your guide to what's on BBC Radio 3 this month, plus TV highlights

JULY'S RADIO 3 LISTINGS

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

Schedules may be subject to alteration. For up-to-date listings see Radio Times

Three to look out for

Sam Jackson, the controller of BBC Radio 3, picks out three great moments to tune into this July

Piano man

Cédric Tiberghien treats us to some superb pianism live from Wigmore Hall. The captivating programme includes George Benjamin's *Shadowlines* and Mozart's Piano Sonata No. 11, K331, with its third movement *Rondo alla turca*.
Radio 3 In Concert, 5 July, 7.30pm

Mountain high

I'm excited to hear the UK premiere of Joby Talbot and Gene Scheer's opera *Everest*, recorded at the Barbican in June. Based on a true story, *Everest* follows four climbers stranded in a blizzard atop the world's highest peak. This UK debut features the BBC Singers and BBC Symphony Orchestra.
Opera on 3, 8 July, 6.30pm

Byrd calls

Donald Macleod presents a series exploring one of Britain's greatest composers: William Byrd. We're shown how Byrd's talent brought him to the heart of musical life in Tudor Britain – yet how his staunch Catholicism made him a dangerous outsider.
Composer of the Week, 3-7 July, 12pm

1 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from ROH. Verdi *Il Trovatore*.
10pm-12am New Music Show
12-1am Freeness

2 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1pm Private Passions Jeremy Deller
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert rpt
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature
7.30-9pm Drama on 3 Emperor and Galilean, Part 1
9pm-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sun Night Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

3 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
CHOICE 12-1pm CotW Byrd
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Gen Artists
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm In Concert EBU
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay rpt tbc
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

4 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
CHOICE 12-1pm CotW Byrd
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from St George's Bristol. New Gen Artists in Concert. Frederick Ballentine (tenor), Ruby Hughes (soprano), Kunal Lahiry (piano)
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay rpt tbc
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

5 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
CHOICE 12-1pm CotW Byrd
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
CHOICE 7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from Wigmore Hall. Works including Sweelinck *6 Variations on 'Mein junges Leben hat ein End'*, Benjamin *Shadowlines*, Beethoven *32 Variations on an Original Theme in C minor WoO 80*, Mozart *Piano Sonata in A K331*. Cédric Tiberghien (piano).
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay rpt tbc
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

6 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
CHOICE 12-1pm CotW Byrd
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from the Palacio de Congresos de Zaragoza. Rachmaninov *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Foulds *April – England*, Sibelius *Symphony No 5*. Boris Giltburg (piano), BBC SO/Sakari Oramo.
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay rpt tbc
11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified with Elizabeth Alker

7 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
CHOICE 12-1pm CotW Byrd
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert. BBC Singers/Sofi Jeannin (tbc)
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay rpt tbc
11pm-1am Late Junction

8 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
CHOICE 6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from Barbican. Talbot *Everest Prelude, Everest* BBC Singers/BBC SO/ Nicole Paiement.
10pm-12am New Music Show
12-1am Freeness

9 SUNDAY

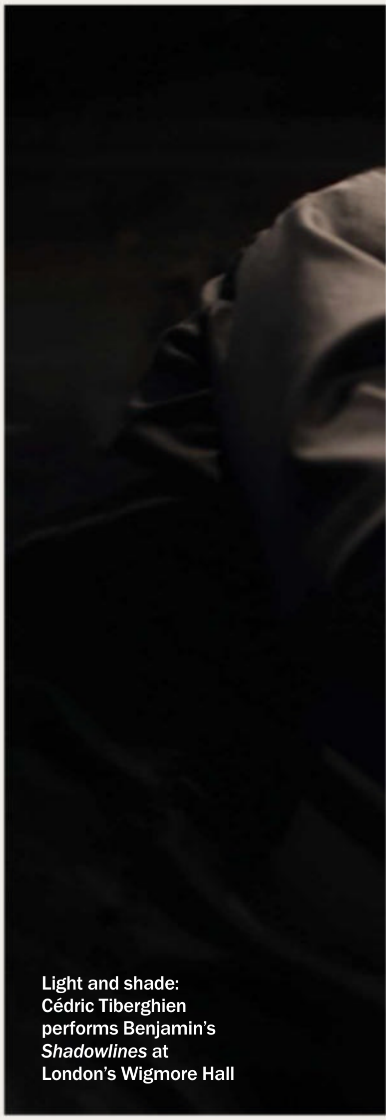
7-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1pm Private Passions Isabella Tree
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert rpt
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Between the Ears From Dawn to Dusk
7.30-9pm Drama on 3 Emperor and Galilean, Part 2
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sun Night Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

10 MONDAY

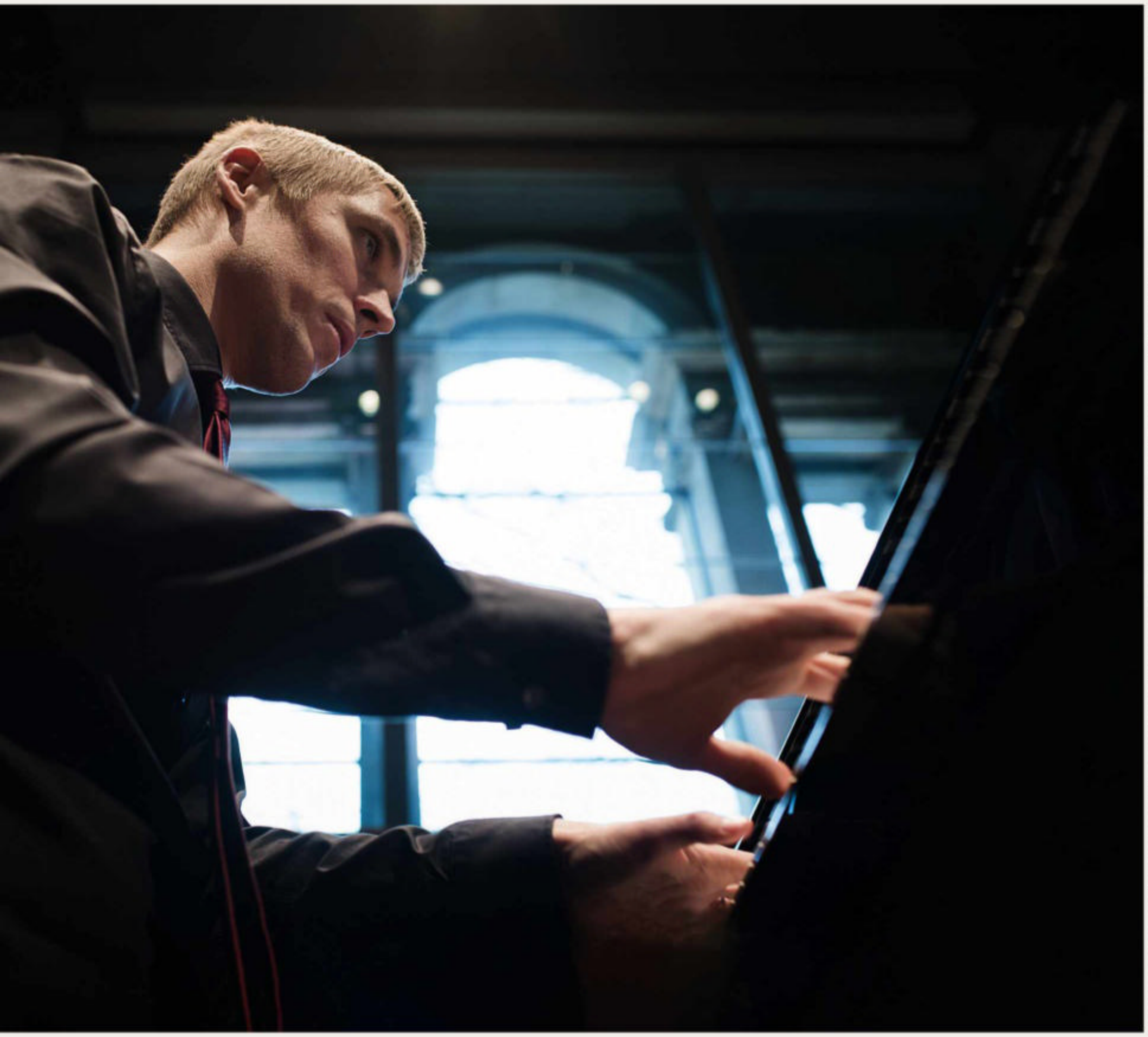
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Marie Jaëll (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Gen Artists
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm In Concert EBU
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm Essay EarthWorks 2
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

11 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast



Light and shade: Cédric Tiberghien performs Benjamin's *Shadowlines* at London's Wigmore Hall



BEN EALOVEGA

9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Marie Jaëll (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from King's College, Cambridge. Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*. Bach Choir, Catherine Wyn-Rogers (mezzo), Andrew Staples (tenor), James Platt (bass), BBC Concert Orchestra/Daniel Hyde.
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm Essay EarthWorks 2
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

12 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Marie Jaëll (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from York Minster. 'Byrd: his influences, his colleagues, and a pervading faith'. The Sixteen/Harry Christophers
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm Essay EarthWorks 2
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

13 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Marie Jaëll (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from Pittville Pump Room, Cheltenham. Bach Cantatas. Hugh Cutting (countertenor), Dunedin Consort/John Butt
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm Essay EarthWorks 2
11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified with Elizabeth Alker

14 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Marie Jaëll (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 1. Works by Sibelius, Frolyak, Grieg & Britten. Paul Lewis (piano), BBC Singers, BBC SO & Chorus/Dalia Stasevska
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm Essay EarthWorks 2
11pm-1am Late Junction

15 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm New Generation Artists
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-2pm Sound of Cinema
2-4pm Live: Proms at Londonderry. Works by Byrd, Morley & Tomkins. Stile Antico
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-8pm tbc
8-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 2. Keep the Faith: Northern Soul. BBC Concert Orchestra/Edwin Outwater.
10pm-12am New Music Show
12-1am Freeness

16 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-11pm Sunday Morning
11am-1pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 3. Works by Debussy, Liszt & Ravel. Benjamin Grosvenor (piano).
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert rpt
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm tbc
7.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 4. Works by Andrea Tarrodi, Beethoven & Vivaldi. Ale Carr (cittern), Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen/Pekka Kuusisto (violin)
10-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sun Night Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

17 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Barber
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert tbc
2-4.30pm Prom 1 rpt
4.30-5pm New Gen Artists
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm From Royal Albert Hall: Prom 5. Works by Coleridge-Taylor, Bruch, Brahms & Bartók. Bomsori Kim (violin), BBC Phil/Anja Bihlmaier
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

18 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Barber
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert: Proms at Londonderry rpt
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 6. Works by Grace-Evangeline Mason, Rachmaninov & Mahler. Stephen Hough (piano), BBC Phil/Mark Wigglesworth
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

19 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Barber
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Prom 3 rpt
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 7. Works by Rachmaninov & Beethoven. BBC NOW/Tadaaki Otaka
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

20 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Barber
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Prom 4 rpt
5-7pm In Tune
7-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 8. Works by Falla, Lalo & Ravel. María Dueñas (violin), BBC SO/Josep Pons
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix
11.30-12.30am Ultimate Calm

21 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Barber
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Prom 5 rpt

Colourful comedy: the Globe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

TV CHOICE
Top picks for July

This month brings another chance to catch the iconic 2016 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from Shakespeare's Globe. Fusing music, dance and some serious comedy, Emma Rice's first production as artistic director features a cast including Ncuti Gatwa, recently named as the new Doctor Who (date and channel tbc).

Elsewhere, head to BBC iPlayer for the *Summer Night Concert from Vienna 2023,* the Vienna Philharmonic's traditional summer showcase from the grounds of Schönbrunn Palace. Yannick Nézet-Séguin coducts, while Elīna Garanča sings arias from Bizet, Gounod and Saint-Saëns.

Last but definitely not least, you can catch the *First Night of the BBC Proms* live on BBC Two on Friday 14 July. BBC Music Magazine Personality of the Year Dalia Stasevska conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and the BBC Singers in a programme including Grieg's passionate Piano Concerto and Sibelius's *Finlandia*. Plus, there's a world premiere from Ukrainian composer Bohdana Frolyak.

4.30-5pm The Listening Service
5-7.30pm In Tune
7.30-8pm Mixtape
8-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 9. Mariza and Luis Guerreiro, Phelipe Ferreira, Dinga (guitars), João Freitas (perc), João Frade (accordion).
10pm-12am Live: Proms at Sage Gateshead. Yazz Ahmed (trumpet), Arun Ghosh (clarinet)
12-1am Late Junction

22 SATURDAY
7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm New Generation Artists
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-2pm Sound of Cinema
2-4pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 10. Horrible Histories: 'Orrible Opera. ENO Opera singers, Chorus & Orch of ENO/Keri-Lynn Wilson
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-7.30pm tbc
7.30-9.30pm Live: Proms at Sage Gateshead. Works by Missy Mazzoli, Mozart & Brahms. Kristian Bezuidenhout (piano), Northern Sinfonia/Dinis Sousa
9.30-10.15pm tbc
10.15pm-12am Live: Proms at Sage Gateshead. Kristina Arakelyan *new work.* Chorus of Royal Northern Sinfonia, Massed Voices of the North East/Grace Rossiter, Timothy Burke

23 SUNDAY
7-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1pm Jazz Record Requests
1-2pm The Early Music Show
2-4pm Proms at Sage Gateshead Reginald Mobley
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature
7.30-9.45pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 12. Beethoven *Symphony No. 9.* Eleanor Dennis (sop), Karen Cargill (mezzo), Nicky Spence (tenor), Michael Mofidian (baritone), BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Scottish SO/Ryan Wigglesworth.
9.45pm-12am Proms at Sage Gateshead. Self Esteem, Northern Sinfonia/Rob Ames.

24 MONDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Tailleferre
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Prom 6 rpt
4.30-5pm New Gen Artists
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 13. Works by Catherine Lamb & Tchaikovsky BBC Scottish SO/Ilan Volkov.
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

25 TUESDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Tailleferre
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Prom 7 rpt
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 14. Works by Noriko Koide, Beethoven & Elgar. Jan Lisiecki (piano), BBC Symphony Orchestra/Elim Chan.
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.15pm-12am Live from Albert Hall: Prom 15. Works by Hans Zimmer, Philip Glass, Kristina Arakelyan, Debussy, Olivia Belli. Anna Lapwood (organ).

26 WEDNESDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Tailleferre
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Proms at Sage Gateshead rpt
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 16. Works by Rachmaninov & Shostakovich. Mané Galoyan (sop), Dmytro Popov (ten), Rodion Pogossov (bass). BBC Symphony Chorus, Hallé Choir, The Hallé/Mark Elder.
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay

27 THURSDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Tailleferre
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Prom 8 rpt
5-7.30pm In Tune plus Mixtape
7.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 17. Orff *Carmina Burana.* Mari Eriksmoen (sop), Levy Segkepane (ten, Germán Olvera (baritone), University of Birmingham Voices, CBSO Youth Chorus, Chorus & SO/Kazuki Yamada.
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix
11.30-12.30am Ultimate Calm

28 FRIDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm CotW Tailleferre
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Prom 12 rpt
4.30-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 18: Tribute to Lata Mangeshkar. Palak & Palash Muchhal (singers), CBSO/ Michael Seal
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-1am Late Junction

29 SATURDAY
7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm New Generation Artists
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5.30pm WOMAD Live
5.30-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 19. Mendelssohn *Elijah.* Carolyn Sampson (sop), Helen Charlston (mezzo), Andrew Staples (tenor), Roderick Williams (baritone), Scottish Chamber Orchestra & Chorus/Maxim Emelyanychev.
10pm-12am New Music Show
12-1am Freeness

30 SUNDAY
7-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1pm The Early Music Show
1-2pm Jazz Record Requests
2-4pm Live: Proms at Aberystwyth. Palestrina *Io son ferito, ahi lasso,* Gesualdo *Asciugate i begli occhi,* Monteverdi *Sì, ch'io vorrei morire,* Gibbons *The Silver Swan,* Byrd *This Sweet and Merry Month of May,* Weelkes *Come, Clap thy Hands,* Ligeti *Nonsense Madrigals,* Judith Weir *Madrigal,* Sarah Rimkus *My heart is like a singing bird.* The Gesualdo Six/ Owain Park.
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature
7.30-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 20. Herrmann *Vertigo Suite,* Mason Bates *Piano Concerto,* Prokofiev *Symphony No. 3.* Daniil Trifonov (piano), BBC SO/Gustavo Gimeno.
10pm-12am WOMAD Live
12-12.30am Classical Fix

31 MONDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12pm Essential Classics
12-1pm Composer of the Week Composers in Conversation
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Prom 13 rpt
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-10pm Live from Royal Albert Hall: Prom 21. Derrick Skye *Nova Plexus (BBC commission: world premiere),* Copland *Clarinet Concerto,* John Adams *Harmonium.* Annelien van Wauwe (clarinet), Crouch End Festival Chorus, BBC National Chorus of Wales, BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Ryan Bancroft.
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay

QUIZ ANSWERS from p104
1. Don Juan (Don Giovanni)
2. Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*
3. Brahms
4. *Sea Pictures*
5. Kathleen Ferrier
6. Arrigo Boito
7. Tippett's *A Child of our Time*
8. Malcolm Arnold
9. Jessye Norman
10. New Zealand bowler Neil Wagner took the wicket of South African batter Dean Elgar in the Test Match at Dunedin, NZ; Trent Boult was bowling from the other end

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THE QUIZ

It's time to put your classical music knowledge to the test

1. The fate of which lothario inspired an opera by Mozart, a ballet by Gluck, a tone poem by Strauss and the second movement of Sibelius's Second Symphony?

2. Which piano work of 1874 did Sir Henry Wood orchestrate and partly record in 1920, only to abandon it on hearing Ravel's orchestration?

3. Who composed his Alto Rhapsody for contralto, male chorus and orchestra as a wedding gift for Julie Schumann in 1869?

4. Dressed as a mermaid, the contralto Clara Butt gave the premiere of which work by Elgar on 5 October 1899?

5. The contralto pictured above died of cancer aged just 41 on 8 October 1953. Who is she?

6. Who wrote the librettos for Verdi's *Otello* and *Falstaff* and Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* as well as composing his own opera *Mefistofele*, premiered in 1868?

7. The spiritual 'Deep River' is heard at the end of which oratorio, premiered in London in 1944?

8. Which composer conducted Deep Purple and the RPO in the world premiere of Jon Lord's Concerto for Group and Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall in 1969?

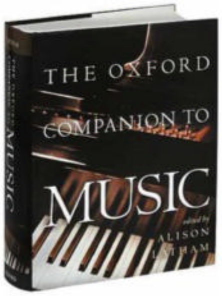
9. Which US soprano flew behind the Iron Curtain in 1982 to record Strauss's *Four Last Songs* with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra?

10. How did the brilliance of Wagner, assisted by Boult, bring about the departure of Elgar on 9 March 2017?

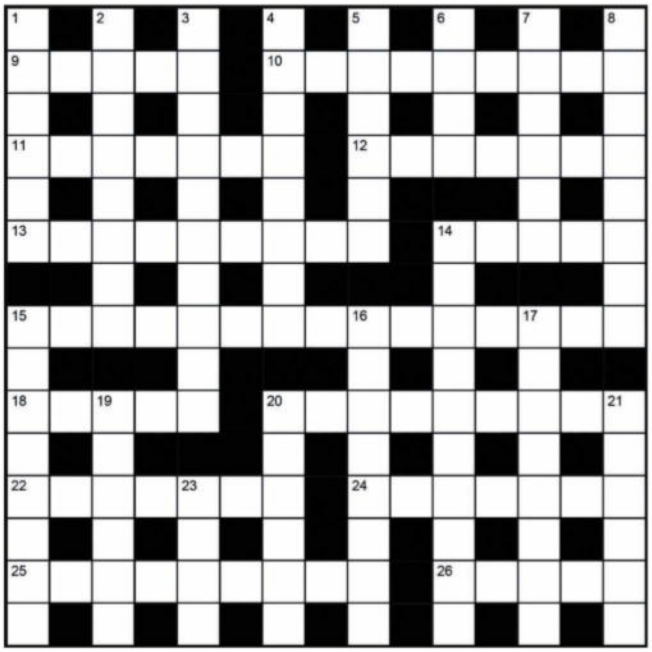
See p102 for answers

The *BBC Music Magazine* PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 387

Crossword set by **Paul Henderson**



The first correct solution of our crossword picked at random will win a copy of **The Oxford Companion to Music.** A runner-up will win **Who Knew? Answers to Questions about Classical Music** (see oup.co.uk). Send answers to: *BBC Music Magazine*, Crossword 387/July 2023, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 11 July 2023 (solution in Oct 2023 issue).



Your name & address ....

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ACROSS

9 Old theatre group backing a stage work with music (5)
10 German dance: male led dancing involving one (9)
11 Here's me, working with diary, to find roughly when the Proms occur? (3-4)
12 The writer brings in American composer for Dietrich? (7)
13 Equal disruption amongst scoundrels in hired audience (9)
14 Musical notes left in seat (3-2)
15 Porter standard, live, the big genuine broadcast (5,3,7)
18 French composer's opening missed by Austrian tenor (5)
20 Pen item for Ko-ok, I see, following particular manner (9)
22 Only able to pluck guitar? Here's the remedy (7)
24 Pathetic sort overlooking piano style in entertainment venue (5-2)
25 German conductor finally back and German singer about to return (9)
26 German singer left African country, heading away (5)

DOWN

1 Very large soprano embraced by funny performer (6)
2 Enjoy rock concert, perhaps, with foremost name in bag (8)
3 Publication that's absorbing pianist's assistant (4-6)
4 German opera venue? But hear ultimate from Italy, possibly (8)
5 Sets down piano pieces (6)
6 Singer Ebrahim starts in opera, making awesome reputation (4)
7 Conductor is dancer-like, to some extent (6)
8 See about study including new song to a lover (8)
14 Spanish dance in unusual guise overturned all I had (10)
15 50s dropouts play drums and hide when upset (8)
16 Ballet heroine ready to dance in ballet after exercises initially (8)
17 Mean to bring in that fellow when the coda appears? (2,3,3)
19 Street performer in vehicle adjoining side of road? Not entirely (6)
20 Mezzo-piano in start of sonata before? It's always in the score (6)
21 French dance featuring Tintin? (6)
23 Performs pop music in bar, being on the rise (4)

APRIL SOLUTION
No. 384

APRIL WINNER
J Monteith, Greenock

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GETTY, BEN EALOVEGA

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Music that changed me

Paul Lewis

Pianist

Paul Lewis CBE is known worldwide for his epic performances of Beethoven's sonata cycles and concertos, as well as for playing Haydn, Liszt, Brahms and Schubert. His recordings have received numerous awards, and he finds time to play chamber music and Lieder recitals with artists including tenor Mark Padmore. He performs at the First Night of the Proms on 14 July and, the following weekend, will be playing Schubert sonatas at Music at Paxton's Summer Festival of Chamber Music.

KAUPO KIKKAS

I grew up in Huyton, near Liverpool, and spent a lot of time in the local library, where the librarian had a taste for classical music. I don't know why I was drawn to it – perhaps because I wanted to discover something different from my father's John Denver LPs! That's where I got to know the Germanic classical repertoire which I tend to play a lot of these days.

My first instrument was the cello – I played with the local youth orchestra and every summer went on an orchestra course in Kent. I remember sitting in the back of the cello section as we played, or tried to play, **BRAHMS**'s Second Symphony. For a ten year-old, the sensation of being immersed in the middle of this music was incredible. I rushed home and borrowed the LP from the library, but I was also lucky enough to go to Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall and hear the RLPO under Marek Janowski play the whole Brahms cycle.

BEETHOVEN's Fourth Symphony with Herbert von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic was another discovery. When I first heard the slow introduction – that transition with the repeated dominant sevenths revving up – I found it utterly thrilling. I was so excited that I dragged my mother in to hear it too. When it reached that moment, I looked for her reaction but... nothing! It taught me that not everyone has the same reaction to music. Many years later our first child, Molly, was due and we were sent home from the hospital until labour began. We sat and listened to the beautiful slow movement of the Fourth, with that clarinet solo, and we both knew that life was about to change forever.

By the time I went to Chetham's School of Music at 14 I was studying piano. If you didn't play an orchestral instrument you were in the choir for the end-of-year concert, and one year we sang **POULENC**'s Gloria. Like the ten-year-old cellist immersed in Brahmsian sound, I found myself in the middle of the choir, immersed in Poulenc's extraordinary harmonic language. I became obsessed with him, and even though I've spent decades playing other stuff, Poulenc has always been there. I've programmed some Poulenc recital programmes for 2025-26.

In my third year at the Guildhall, I took part in a masterclass with pianist Alfred Brendel. He asked me to keep in touch, and when I went to his home in Hampstead for my first lesson I played him **LISZT**'s *Dante Sonata*. It lasts about 15 minutes and we spent five hours on it – I remember getting home and I could barely think. I thought I knew it well because I'd been playing it since I was 15, but he had dropped a bomb on my whole idea of the piece. That moment changed my whole working process, the way I practised, the way I approached music and what I was trying to achieve. It felt like I was left vulnerable, but it was incredibly exciting at the same time.

As head of keyboard at the Guildhall, Iain Burnside introduced me to the great Lieder cycles in my third year. I was knocked out by *Die schöne Müllerin* – something about the angst-ridden, lovelorn young man struck a chord with me. The last song, 'Des Baches Wiegenlied' (The Brook's Lullaby), has to be one of the most incredible strophic songs ever written. Its hypnotic effect is very particular to that song, but it opened my thinking about **SCHUBERT** in general. I'm in the middle of a two-year Schubert sonata project and today I was looking at the big A major Sonata D959 for the first time in more than ten years. The last movement, even though it's very different, has something of that hypnotism so fundamental to Schubert. The lullaby was my first introduction to that; it has stayed with me and continues to influence the way I approach Schubert.

Interview by Amanda Holloway

The choices

Brahms Symphony No. 2
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/Marek Janowski *ASV CDQS6102*

Beethoven Symphony No. 4
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra/Simon Rattle *Warner Classics 9029660766*

Poulenc Gloria
Kathleen Battle (soprano); Tanglewood Festival Chorus; Boston Symphony Orchestra/Seiji Ozawa *Deutsche Grammophon 445 5672*

Liszt Après une lecture de Dante No. 7
Alfred Brendel (piano) *Decca 478 2825*

Schubert Die schöne Müllerin
Peter Schreier (tenor), András Schiff (piano) *Decca 430 4142*

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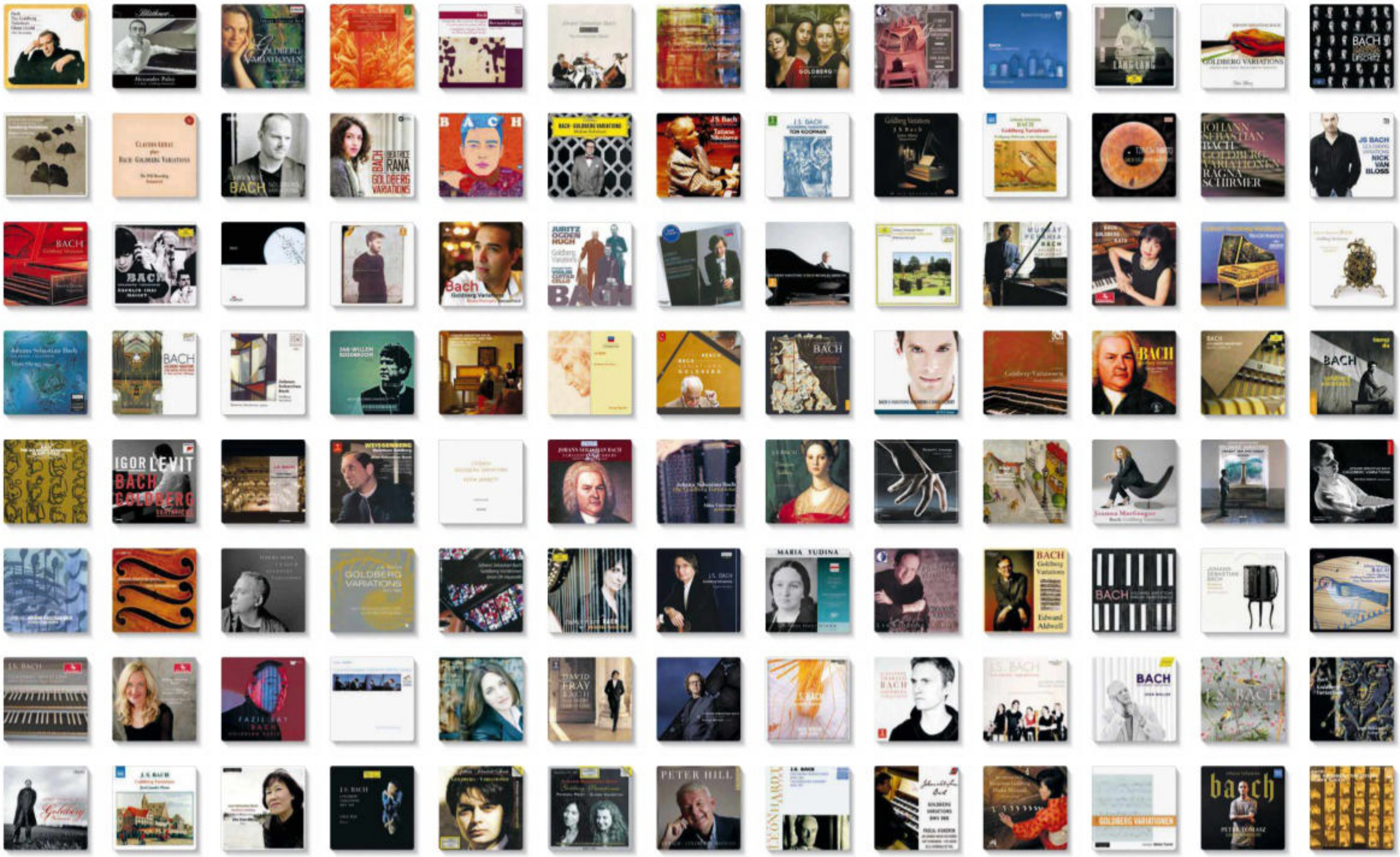

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